

GCC welcomes improved ties with Iran

NICOSIA (R) — Foreign ministers of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) welcomed improved relations with Iran and called Sunday for a new phase of cooperation to promote regional security and stability. A statement issued after a two-day meeting in the Saudi Arabian Red Sea port of Jeddah said the ministers also welcomed efforts by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to consolidate security in the region. The statement, carried by Gulf news agencies monitored in Nicosia, said the ministers "noted with satisfaction progress made in contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran and looked forward to a new phase of cooperation in the interest of regional security and stability." The ministers, from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, noted with "deep concern the aggressive policy of the Iraqi regime and its procrastination in implementing U.N. Security Council resolutions related to its aggression on Kuwait." The news agencies earlier quoted Qatar's Foreign Minister Mubarak Ali Al Khater as saying in an opening address that improved relations between Iran and the six GCC states would have a positive impact on future security and stability in the Gulf.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراية

Tunisia reports arrest of activists

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia said Sunday the authorities arrested a group of Muslim fundamentalists on Thursday but did not confirm that the spokesman of the outlawed Nahdha movement was among them. In a statement issued in Paris Saturday, the Nahdha movement said its spokesman in Tunisia, Habib Ellouze, had been arrested along with four other members of the group, including one with his wife and two-year-old child. "A group of people were arrested in the Bizerte area (northwest of Tunis) during investigations into a fundamentalist plot, but the name Habib Ellouze does not figure among their identity papers," an official source told Reuters. The source said the authorities were making inquiries to find out if their identity papers were false. He denied that a child had been detained. "We do not arrest babies," he said. Mr. Ellouze, a member of the Nahdha's politburo, had been the movement's under- ground spokesman for several months. Most other members of the Nahdha leadership are in prison or in exile. Police had been looking for Mr. Ellouze since May, when authorities announced the arrest of 300 Muslim activists on suspicion of subversion. Early this month the authorities announced they had found a cache of rifles and handguns in a Tunis suburb.

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Crown Prince attends army exercises

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday toured a number of Armed Forces units and watched training exercises. The Crown Prince, who was accompanied by Chief of Staff General Fathi Abu Taleb, was briefed on the training programmes being implemented. The Prince and the army chief watched military exercises with live ammunition and expressed appreciation of the officers' endeavours. The Prince conveyed to the troops greetings from His Majesty King Hussein, the Armed Forces supreme commander. Senior army officers and the Armed Forces inspector general attended the exercises.

Jordan to get \$10m IDB loan

BAHRAIN (R) — The Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB) said Sunday it would provide \$10 million to help finance development and foreign trade in Islamic states. The allocation includes \$10 million for Jordan. A statement from the 45-member IDB gave details of the loans but did not say when they would be extended. Jordan would receive \$10 million to cover the cost of oil imports from an IDB member state. Iran would receive another \$10 million to pay for steel imports. Pakistan would receive \$32 million to finance the purchase of an 85,000-tonne oil tanker and another \$6 million to finance palm oil imports from Malaysia. The statement said, "The bank would also cover the cost of equipment purchases for Pakistan's national company for yarn and weaving worth \$18.4 million. Tunisia would receive \$18 million to finance the purchase of a passenger ship and another \$5 million for cotton imports. Morocco would receive a \$15 million loan to cover the cost of oil imported from an IDB member state and another \$7.29 million to help finance part of a dam project. Algeria would receive \$13 million for cotton imports from IDB member states and another \$2.2 million to pay for cement imports from Morocco.

Jordan recognises Baltic states

AMMAN (R) — Jordan has recognised the Baltic states' independence and will soon establish ties with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, a government official said Sunday. He told Reuters the decision was taken by the Council of Ministers during their weekly session Saturday evening. The Soviet Union, which annexed the three Baltic states in 1940, officially granted them independence earlier this month.

Arabic economic daily launched

CAIRO (R) — A newspaper saying it is the Arab World's first Arabic-language finance and economic daily began publication Sunday. The 16-page Al Alam Al Youm (The World Today) led its first issue with a report from Moscow that Russian President Boris Yeltsin wanted balanced relations with Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East. Mr. Yeltsin was reported to want economic relations to be the focus of Russia's ties with the Arab World. The newspaper, edited by Ibrahim Adib, is published in Cairo by United Journalists, a British-registered company run mainly by Egyptian reporters and writers.

Japan's minesweepers complete mission

ABU DHABI (R) — Japan's six-vessel minesweeping flotilla will leave the Gulf on Sept. 23 after searching for Iraqi mines planted during the Gulf war. It was the Japanese navy's first mission outside home waters since World War II. Four minesweepers, backed by two support vessels, destroyed 34 mines in northern Gulf during their three-month tour. Captain Taosa Oishi, commander of the over-seas minesweeper force, told reporters on the supply ship Tokiwa in Abu Dhabi.

Israeli ministers call Bush a liar and an anti-Semite

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli cabinet ministers Sunday launched fierce attacks against U.S. President George Bush in the raging row over Israel's request for \$10 billion in housing loan guarantees. At least one minister described Mr. Bush as a liar and an anti-Semite. The minister also said Israel should not attend the proposed peace conference scheduled for next month. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had to intervene to tone down the angry outbursts from his ministers at the weekly cabinet meeting, Israel Radio said. Some ministers urged Mr. Shamir to stand firm against the administration and "hit back fiercely" against Mr. Bush's insistence on delaying the loan guarantees to Israel for the absorption of the Soviet immigrant influx, the radio said. Mr. Bush was called a liar and accused of anti-Semitism, it said. But Mr. Shamir, along with

Foreign Minister David Levy and Defence Minister Moshe Arens, counselled against such strong language, and Mr. Arens rejected the anti-Semitism charge. Hard-line Minister-without-Portfolio Rehavam Zeevi "offered unprecedented criticism of President Bush and called him an anti-Semite," according to Eden Bitental, Mr. Zeevi's adviser. Asked by reporters waiting outside the closed session about his comments, Mr. Zeevi said: "I said he is very close to it — to being an anti-Semite and anti-Israel. Israel has to fight the (U.S.) administration..." "I think we have to agree with the president of the United States and to tell him that if he wants to take a break of four months on the guarantees, we can postpone the conference for the next four months until he will have time to decide on the loan guarantees," he said.

(Continued on page 5)

Hopes fade for quick hostage release

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanese Shiite leaders dampened hopes that a Western hostage would go free within hours on Sunday but politicians and diplomats said the prospects for a release within days remained excellent. A pro-Iranian cleric, Sheikh Ahmad Taleb, said Saturday the kidnappers would set free one of two British hostages — Church of England envoy Terry Waite or former World War II fighter pilot Jack Mann — within 24 hours. Mr. Mann, 77, was the more probable choice because the kidnappers would want to keep the more valuable Waite until later in a complicated step-by-step exchange coordinated by the United Nations, diplomats said. The pro-Iranian kidnappers themselves remained silent but diplomats said Sheikh Taleb, a member of the pro-Iranian Hiz-

ballah movement, had since extended the timescale for the next release. "Taleb backed off for unknown reasons," said a diplomat. "First he said 24 hours, then 48 hours and even plain 'soon'." The country's highest-ranking Shiite Muslim cleric said in an interview that a Western hostage would be released within weeks, not days. Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddine, who spoke to the British Broadcasting Corporation, also called for a comprehensive swap of Arab prisoners held by Israel in return for Western hostages, rather than a step-by-step process. Asked if the release of a Westerner were imminent, he said: "I can't say in a matter of days, but I can say in a matter of weeks — provided that American and Western pressure continues to be

(Continued on page 5)

Talabani reports progress in talks with Baghdad

ANKARA (Agencies) — Iraqi Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, who has been holding out against a draft autonomy agreement with the Baghdad government, was quoted Sunday as saying the autonomy negotiations had made progress. Mr. Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), told the semi-official Anatolian news agency that despite the progress, which he did not describe in detail, the months of talks had not yet reached a conclusion. He was speaking on arrival in Ankara to meet Turkish officials. He said he would go on to the United States but gave no details of his talks in either country. Mr. Talabani has reportedly taken a tougher line on autonomy than fellow rebel leader Massoud Barzani of the Kurdish Democratic Party, who has done most of the negotiating. The main obstacles have been Baghdad's refusal to include the oil province of Kirkuk in the autonomous region and Kurdish demands for guarantees that Iraq will be more democratic. Mr. Talabani denied a Turkish newspaper report that Iraqi Kurds had promised to keep out Kurdish separatists from Turkey, who frequently cross into northern Iraq, in exchange for humanitarian help from Turkey. Mr. Barzani's party and the Turkish government have also denied the report. Mr. Talabani met with Kaya Toperi, an aide to President Turgut Ozal immediately after his arrival. No details were made available after they met. He told reporters earlier Sunday in Diyarbakir in southeastern Turkey that he would also visit the United States. He did not say who he would meet with the United States. His visit coincided with the presence here of the representatives of KDP.



KING RECEIVES IRANIAN MESSAGES: His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received a message from Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani dealing with bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East. The message was delivered by Mohammad Kazem, director of the Middle East Department at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, in an audience at the Royal Court. The audience was attended by Royal Court Chief Shari Zaid Ben Shaker and the military advisor to the King, His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad (see related story on page 3).

Moscow pushing for peace parley, ambassador says

ALGIERS (Agencies) — The Soviet Union, despite upheavals at home, is pushing ahead with efforts to arrange a Middle East peace conference, the Soviet ambassador to Algeria said Sunday. Alexandre Aksentiev told a news conference, "the Soviet Union, the same as other interested parties, is doing all it can to ensure that the convening of this conference is possible." Moscow and Washington are the co-sponsors of the conference, which is tentatively scheduled for October. But they failed last week, during a visit to Moscow by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, to set a date or issue invitations. Mr. Baker is about to start another Middle East tour to try to resolve outstanding problems, the biggest of which is Palestinian representation at the talks. Mr. Aksentiev said a conference would not be possible if the Soviet Union had insisted on a single formula for Palestinian representation from the beginning of preparations. "That is why the Soviet Union has proposed several variants... the Soviet Union considers that it is up to the Palestinians themselves to define their position, what form their representation takes (and) responds to their future national interests," he said. Moscow believed that "if Israel abandoned its severe and dictatorial position," a suitable formula would be mixed Palestinian-Jordanian representation, he added. "But at the same time other variants are possible. We do not exclude anything or reject anything." Israel has agreed to attend provided that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has no say in the composition of the Palestinian delegation and that none of the Palestinian delegates are from Arab East Jerusalem. Egypt Sunday praised Mr. Baker's upcoming trip to the Middle East and hoped it will result in the convening of a peace conference in October. Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters that there remained issues that had to be agreed upon before the convening of the peace conference like Palestinian representation and where the meeting can be held.

Israeli soldier shot dead in West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Unknown assailants shot dead an Israeli soldier in the occupied West Bank and military sources asserted Sunday that Palestinians were switching from stones to firearms in their uprising against Israel. In Nablus, the West Bank's largest city, Israeli soldiers opened fire on stone-throwers and fatally wounded a Palestinian teenager, the army and Palestinian said. The army and hospital officials identified the victim as Burak Al Masri, 17 and said he was shot in the head. Nablus residents were observing a general strike Saturday in protest of Friday's shooting death of a Palestinian youth who was also shot during a stone-throwing clash with soldiers. Arab jour-

Iraq to seek remains of troops buried alive

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq wants to recover the remains of Iraqi troops buried alive by U.S. forces in the Gulf war and appeals to the world to condemn this "odious crime," Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein Khodayer said Sunday. In a statement carried by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), he said his ministry had drawn up urgent messages to international organisations calling on them to "condemn this odious crime and expose its dimensions and motives." The ruthless killers who buried the troops in their trenches should be "eternally cursed," he said. "The ministry will demand from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the U.S. government full information on military positions subjected to the cowardly crime of extermination committed by American forces," he added. The U.S. Defence Department said Thursday U.S. tanks fitted with ploughblades buried many Iraqi troops alive in trenches in a key assault during the final days of the war. But Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams declined to confirm or deny published reports that the number of troops could have ranged from hundreds to thousands. Mr. Khodayer said Iraq would send the messages to the Arab League, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and the secretary general and Security Council of the United Nations. Once the trenches were located, Iraq would ask for the return of the remains of the Iraqi victims as soon as possible, he said. The use of earthmovers and tanks outfitted with plows to bury dead Iraqis, and in some cases soldiers still alive, was reported last Thursday by the New York newspaper Sunday. Three brigades of the First Meebanised Infantry division were employed the machines to destroy about 110 kilometres of trenches defended by about 8,000 Iraqi soldiers, the newspaper said. The action came last winter as

(Continued on page 3)

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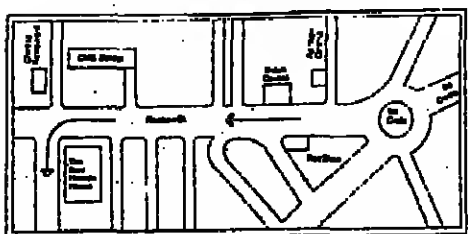
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Najibullah pledges cooperation with superpower peace plan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — Afghan President Najibullah has promised cooperation with the United States and the Soviet Union over their decision to halt all weapons supplies to the warring sides in his country.

He assured support for the plan in messages sent on Saturday to President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union and President George Bush of the United States, official Kabul Radio said.

The broadcast, monitored in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, quoted Mr. Najibullah as saying the superpower agreement resembled an earlier United Nations plan to end the 13-year-old Afghan war.

The five-point plan proposed by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar last May envisaged a ceasefire and a transitional administration leading to elections.

The radio said Mr. Najibullah announced the full support of his government for the Soviet-U.S. agreement to cut off all arms supplies by January to allow free elections.

Kabul earlier said it was ready to stop its war against Western-backed guerrillas.

Radical guerrillas said they would continue fighting to topple Mr. Najibullah's government in Kabul, though some have given a guarded approval to the arms cutoff deal announced in Moscow Friday.

Two major guerrilla parties based in Pakistan welcomed the agreement Friday and called for its strict implementation, saying the arms cutoff would hasten the collapse of Mr. Najibullah's government.

But radical guerrilla leader Gurbangul Hekmatyar Saturday partly retracted from a previous statement of approval by his Hezbi-Islami Party and said the agreement contained a trick to bolster Mr. Najibullah.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin Friday announced the agreement to halt

arms supplies by January and proposed a ceasefire between Kabul and the rebels.

Mr. Hekmatyar said in a statement the decision to continue arms supplies until January was "based on ill-intent" and meant to prolong Mr. Najibullah's government.

His views were shared by another radical guerrilla leader, Mohammad Younis Khalis, who called the U.S.-Soviet agreement unjust, saying it could further increase the armament imbalance in favour of Kabul.

Jamiat-Islami guerrilla party leader Burhanuddin Rabbani said Friday: "If the Soviet Union has really decided to cut off assistance to Kabul we welcome it."

He rejected an appeal from Mr. Perez de Cuellar to the Mujahedeen not to attack Kabul.

Mr. Hekmatyar was heavily involved in a coup attempt by Afghan Defence Minister Shahmawaz Tanai in March last year and believed another attempt could be made to topple Mr. Najibullah.

"We expect a change at any time in Afghanistan because the internal dynamics are moving towards change," an official of Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezbi said.

Hezb, one of the most powerful of the seven guerrilla groups based in Pakistan, has stayed aloof from recent efforts orchestrated by Pakistan and Iran to try to bring Mujahedeen leaders onto one platform.

The Mujahedeen have publicly refused to deal with Mr. Najibullah or senior figures in his Watan (Homeland) Party while maintaining contacts in secret.

Pakistan's attitude will be vital because it has acted as the conduit of arms to the guerrillas and main distributor for individual groups and commanders throughout the war.

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Mohammad Khan on Friday called the U.S.-Soviet agreement "a move in the right direction" but said it would have been better as part of an overall

peace package.

The Kabul government has been heavily dependent on Soviet assistance since the last Red Army troops withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989.

Western diplomats estimate the Kabul government has received as much as \$300 million in military and humanitarian aid from the Kremlin every month, although the Soviets contend that figure is exaggerated.

Mr. Hekmatyar denounced the Moscow agreement as "a plot to deceive the Mujahedeen" and to deny them their hard-fought victory.

"The Soviets were ready to put an immediate end to the military supplies to Kabul, but the Americans seemed unwilling just because they had no alternative for Najibullah," said Mr. Hekmatyar, who dislikes the Soviets and the West.

"The continuation of military supplies to the puppet regime during the next fall will guarantee its survival," said Mr. Hekmatyar.

"The date for the cessation of arms has been postponed in a bid to give new life to the puppet regime. But God willing, the regime will not last long because the Mujahedeen are determined to take a befitting action against it," he said.

But the delay also has provided a window for the shipment of massive quantities of weapons, ammunition and supplies for the guerrillas, who reportedly have as much as two-year stockpile.

Moscow and Washington said Friday that they would not increase shipments to their warring clients.

But witnesses Saturday said they saw trucks hauling supplies, including two tanks, across the frontier towards the Afghan border town of Torkham.

In Kabul, witnesses said dozens of giant Soviet transport planes began landing at the city's airport Friday. Earlier this week, only three or four planes arrived daily, they said.

Ghozali assails some FLN members

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian Prime Minister Sidahmad Ghozali, who wants parliament to pass a law which could lead to general elections this year, said Saturday some members of his party were trying to destabilise the government.

Mr. Ghozali, appearing on Algerian television, did not name the members of the National Liberation Front (FLN).

The FLN, which ran the formerly one-party country for nearly three decades, dominates parliament which Mr. Ghozali wants to change election laws so a date for the poll can be set.

"There are members who are acting, night and day, to make the government and its programme fail," he said.

Algeria's first multi-party general elections were due to be held on June 27 but were postponed after violence involving Islamic fundamentalists protesting at the original law which they said was fixed to favour the FLN.

Mr. Ghozali, who has promised clean and fair elections, said a militant FLN minority was campaigning against individual ministers in an attempt to destabilise the government.

"But I tell them, if you have the intention of making the government fail, you are incapable. We held firm," he said.

"I regret as a citizen that these minority people give the impression the FLN does not want power to alternate (in different governments)."

He said he hoped parliament would meet and vote on the election law changes before the end of the month "to enable the head of the government and the President (Chadli Benjedid) to keep to their promise to hold elections before the end of the year."

Mr. Benjedid has said the election date would be fixed when all preparations, including the change in election law, had been completed.

Mr. Ghozali has asked parliament to hold a special session on Sunday to debate and pass a new draft election law, submitted to the National Assembly last Wednesday.

But Parliamentary President Abdel Aziz Belkhadem said a session opening Sunday would not give deputies enough time to devote to such an important change.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Army worms attack crops in Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA (R) — Ethiopia's northern province of Tigrey, trying to recover from a devastating civil war and drought, is facing a new fight — against swarms of crop-eating army worms. The Ethiopian news agency said Sunday that two planes of the Desert Locust Control Organisation for East Africa (DLCOEA) were spraying pesticide to control the insects. Aid workers were quoted as saying the pests would add to the crisis caused by drought and famine in which more than 2.4 million people are dependent on emergency food-aid. The United Nations is airlifting food to Tigrey from the Red Sea port of Djibouti to try to overcome transport bottlenecks.

Kuwait, Bahrain recognise Baltic independence

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — Kuwait and Bahrain Sunday recognised the independence of the three Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. The decision was taken at the cabinet's weekly meeting and announced on the state-run Kuwait radio. The Soviet Union, which annexed the three states in 1940, granted the three states independence earlier this month. Bahrain also recognised the Baltic states' independence on Sunday, its state-run Gulf News Agency reported.

Moroccan group condemns Serfaty's loss of nationality

RABAT (R) — Morocco's Association of Human Rights (AMDH) urged the government Sunday to revoke its decision to strip Marxist leader Abraham Serfaty of his Moroccan nationality. The AMDH, one of three rights groups in Morocco, said in a statement it was relieved that Mr. Serfaty was released Friday after 17 years in custody. The government said Mr. Serfaty, leader of the outlawed Marxist-Leninist group Ilal Amam (Forward), was expelled immediately after his release. It said he had Brazilian, not Moroccan citizenship. He was jailed for life in 1977 for plotting to overthrow the monarchy of King Hassan. AMDH "expresses its astonishment and its condemnation of the procedure used to strip him of his nationality and expel him from the country on his release, and demands that the government revoke it," the group said. Mr. Serfaty, 65, was born in Casablanca of a Jewish family. The Interior Ministry said he had stated in the past that he was a Brazilian citizen and he was expelled as a foreigner.

Iraq to return art treasures to Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait expects to receive the first shipment Monday of Islamic art treasures that Iraq taken from the emirate during its seven-month occupation. Officials in Kuwait said the shipment would be flown from Baghdad to a U.N. plane. They did not have details on how many of the 17,000 missing artefacts — from one of the most important collections of Islamic art in the world — would be returned in the first stage. Representatives of Kuwait, Iraq and the United Nations began work in Baghdad Saturday on listing, packing and shipping the treasures. Kuwait did not send a delegation to Baghdad and was represented by four Britons and an American. The emirate's two principal museums were the House of Islamic Antiquities and the Kuwait National Museum.

Head of U.S. central command to visit Gulf

MANAMA, Bahrain (R) — General Joseph Hoar, commander of the U.S. military central command in Tampa, Florida, will visit the Gulf for the first time later this month. U.S. military officials in the region said. A spokesman for the U.S. military in Dhahran declined to give details of the general's agenda, which will include visits to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Gen. Hoar succeeded General Norman Schwarzkopf, who commanded U.S.-led allied forces in the Gulf war against Iraq. Gen. Schwarzkopf retired last month. The United States and Kuwait are expected to sign a 10-year defence agreement soon that provides for joint training and the placement of U.S. military equipment in the emirate. Pentagon officials say Defence Secretary Dick Cheney is engaged in talks aimed at reaching similar agreements with Kuwait's five Gulf Arab allies — Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

USAID names representative for West Bank programme

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Suzanne Olds, a 10-year veteran with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), was sworn in last week as the USAID representative for the agency's West Bank programme. She is the first person to hold this position and will be based in Jerusalem.

Ms. Olds took the oath of office in a ceremony at the State Department attended by USAID Administrator Dr. Ronald W. Roskens and other senior officials from USAID and the State Department.

She will direct the programme, which began in 1974 to demonstrate America's concern for the humanitarian and economic needs of Palestinians in the West Bank. Over the past year, USAID has provided Palestinians with about \$15 million in economic assistance and food aid.

Since the programme began, USAID has provided \$82 million to help more than one million Palestinians in roughly two-thirds of the communities throughout the West Bank.

"The current USAID West Bank strategy is designed to help expand public and private institutions to support economic activity, and improve health and social services," Mr. Roskens said. "The strategy is being refocused to help Palestinian residents strengthen private enterprise and create viable employment opportunities."

Ms. Olds joined USAID in 1981 as a population advisor in Bangladesh, was appointed director of the Office of Health and Population in that country, and served in that position until late 1986.

More recently, she has served as a health/population development officer in the agency's Bureau of Asia and the Near East; as director of USAID's population office in India; and as narcotics coordinator in the bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Kuwaiti ruler to visit U.S. Thursday

KUWAIT (R) — The emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, will pay an official visit to Washington starting Thursday.

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dhan Abdullah Al Othman, told reporters after a cabinet meeting Sunday that the visit would continue until Oct. 1. It would "eliminate the good relations between the two friendly countries."

Earlier this month, Kuwait approved signing a military cooperation agreement with the United States.

The defence minister, Sheikh Ali Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah, said two weeks ago the agreement, under which the U.S. would stockpile weapons and carry out joint exercises in the emirate, would be signed soon.

A U.S. led multi-national task force ended Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait in February.

Maghreb leaders think of internal problems as union meets in Casablanca

CASABLANCA (R) — Five Maghreb heads of state preoccupied with domestic problems gathered Sunday for a summit designed to push plans for political and economic Union.

The leaders of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia have said they are anxious to give new impetus to the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) which has made little real progress since it was set up two-and-a-half years ago.

The official Algerian news agency APS said decisions taken at previous summits had "often remained dead letters" and the AMU's "credibility, evolution and the future of its relations with other groups" depended on implementation of its plans.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Abdul Latif Filali told a preparatory meeting "difficulties and obstacles block the practical and efficient operation of institutions and Maghreb cooperation."

Diplomats said most Maghreb leaders were more concerned with urgent domestic problems rather than with topics like the creation of a Maghreb customs union planned for 1995 and a North African common market due by the end of the century.

A summit in June was postponed when Algeria's President Chadli Benjedid dismissed the government after Muslim fundamentalist violence erupted. Algeria is giving top priority to its first multi-party elections due before the end of the year.

Muslim fundamentalism also threatens Tunisia where 300 activists including military were arrested in May and five others were reported detained Friday. Authorities say they suspect the Nahdha Muslim movement of armed subversion.

In Morocco, leaders of the fundamentalist Ad Wal Ihsan movement are in jail for belonging to an illegal group, but the authorities have offered to legalise it on certain conditions.

Morocco is preoccupied by Western Sahara, the former Spanish colony its claims is an integral part of the kingdom.

A ceasefire was proclaimed on Sept. 6 to halt a 15-year war with Polisario guerrillas. The United Nations hopes to settle the conflict with a self-determination referendum.

A final problem is where to base the AMU's headquarters. Tunisia is anxious to play host following the Arab League's move to Cairo.

Primakov in Kuwait talks aimed at boosting relations

KUWAIT CITY (Agencies) — Soviet envoy Yevgeny Primakov arrived in Kuwait Sunday on a visit to foster Moscow's ties with this oil-rich emirate.

It is the first visit by a Soviet official since Kuwait's liberation from Iraq's seven-month occupation in February.

Mr. Primakov told reporters at Kuwait international airport he will discuss bilateral relations with the emir, Sheikh Jaber al Ahmad Al Sabah, during his 48-hour stay.

He said he expected his discussions to be "useful and fruitful."

Mr. Primakov said he was not going to ask for financial support for his economically bedraggled country.

"But we know and His Highness told us before ... that after the war the relations and especially economic relations between the two countries should be and would be developed," said Mr. Primakov.

Mr. Primakov is scheduled to visit the Burgan oil fields south of Kuwait City where more than 100 oil wells, set ablaze in the Gulf war, are still burning.

Kuwait is Mr. Primakov's fourth stop on his current Middle East tour. He is scheduled to fly to Iran Tuesday morning.



King Hassan II

ferendum in January. Mauritania decided to forego the rotating chairmanship this year due to ethnic tensions and demands for political reforms voiced by its black minority.

Another ethnic conflict has tended to sour relations between Algeria and Libya. The Algerian press has alleged Libya armed Tuareg rebels fighting the Mali government for autonomy and causing a flood of Tuareg refugees into southern Algeria.

Diplomats said these problems were unlikely to be on the agenda of the two-day summit but they would certainly be discussed informally.

The agenda includes a joint stand on the Middle East peace conference planned for next month and a response to Washington's suggestion that the Maghreb should take part.

Another major item is the AMU's relations with the European Community, the area's biggest trading partner. Diplomats said experts would meet in Morocco on Sept. 18-20 to prepare a Foreign Ministers' meeting between the Maghreb five and four EC members France, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The promotion of inter-Maghreb trade, at present only eight per cent of their total exchanges, is also high on the agenda. It has so far been stalled by failure to agree on a payments system.

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Polisario asks king to cooperate with plan

ALGIERS (R) — The Polisario Front, on the eve of a five-nation North African summit in Morocco, called on King Hassan Sunday to remove the obstacles to peace in the Western Sahara and cooperate with a United Nations peace plan.

The secretary general of the front, Mohammed Abdul Aziz, said in a statement to Reuters the Moroccan monarch should "clear the ground" for a return to peace in the region, where Polisario guerrillas have fought for independence for 15 years.

"The illegal occupation of the Western Sahara and aggression against our people constitute the only obstacle to the realisation of the Maghreb ideal," he said.

A U.N.-sponsored ceasefire came into force on Sept. 6 and a referendum is due to be held next year to give Saharans the choice between independence and integration with Morocco.

But a dispute on the number of Saharans who should take part in the referendum threatens to delay the poll.

Morocco claims the former Spanish colony is an integral part of the kingdom. Algeria backed the Polisario, causing friction between the two Maghreb neighbours until 1989.

Syrian papers renew warnings to U.S.

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syrian newspapers repeated warnings Sunday that U.S. submission to Israeli demands for a \$10 billion housing loan guarantee would endanger the peace process.

"Israel is not interested in a just and comprehensive peace in the region, but is only concerned with receiving more financial, political and military support in order to achieve its expansionist plans," said the daily Al Baath, the organ of the ruling Baath Party.

"Submission to Israel's blackmail is only leading to the destruction of the peace efforts," said an editorial in the English-language Syria Times.

"If the international community realises that Israel is the only party obstructing peace, this will be a positive and important development," said Tishrin, the official government newspaper.

Israel has also warned of threats to the peace process, but only if President George Bush persists in his decision to delay consideration of the loan guarantee it has requested until after the peace process is under way.

Mr. Bush said Thursday that he would veto any legislation providing Israel with a new loan guarantee before next month's projected Middle East peace conference.

The U.S. president declared that "for the first time in history the vision of Israelis sitting with their Arab neighbours to talk peace is a real prospect."

"Nothing should be done that might interfere with this prospect, and if necessary, I will use my veto power to prevent that from happening," Mr. Bush said.

He was referring to efforts in Congress and pressure by the Israeli lobby for immediate approval of the loan guarantee, despite his request to delay its consideration for 120 days.

Israel is pressing for approval of the \$10 billion loan guarantee so that it can proceed with the construction of housing for the wave of new Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel.

The issue has also resulted in a confrontation between Mr. Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Speaking during a visit to Paris on Friday Mr. Shamir warned Mr. Bush that delaying the guarantee until after the start of the peace process could backfire and harm the negotiation prospects.

Mr. Shamir argued that Mr. Bush had it backwards.

"If the delay is accepted, this could harden the stance of the Arab states in negotiations," Mr. Shamir said. "They will see this as putting pressure on Israel and this will create unexpected difficulties in negotiations which, even without this, could be difficult and complicated."

The Bush-Shamir confrontation is over Israel's insistence to proceed with the establishment of new Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab territories.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Documentary
18:05 News in French
18:15 Weekly Sports Magazine
19:20 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Surgical Spirit
21:10 Murder she wrote
22:30 News in English
22:30 Over My Dead Body

PRAYER TIMES

04:56 Fajr
05:14 (Sunrise) Duha
12:31 Dhuhr
16:02 'Asr
18:40 Maghreb
20:06 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Trinitarian Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 622541.

Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625453.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 623824, 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be hot and winds will be northerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman Min./Max. temp. 20 / 35
Aqaba 25 / 37
Dahesh 20 / 37
Jordan Valley 24 / 38

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 36, Aqaba 35. Humidity readings: Amman 35 per cent, Aqaba 46 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ghazi Zawadeh 736123
Dr. Abdul Aziz Taboun 83708
Dr. Fakhri Abu Tayeh 838080
Dr. Abdul Majid Smer 791405
Firas pharmacy 661912
Perdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nadoud pharmacy 623672
Al Salem pharmacy 636720
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmoukhi pharmacy 637660

IRBID:

Dr. Mohammad Zoubi (-)
Al Shams pharmacy 273825

ZARQA:

Dr. Mufied Dhaura (-)
Khalil pharmacy 983417

EMERGENCIES

Lack of proper background checks for personal loans led to huge losses for Petra Bank, witness testifies

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — All norms of prudent checking of personal creditworthiness were ignored and haphazard granting of personal loans with ulterior motives characterised the operations of the bankrupt Petra Bank, according to a key witness in the ongoing trials of cases related to what was once Jordan's second largest commercial bank.

The credit card operations and purchase of foreign government debts also figured high during the Military Court hearings of Petra Bank cases Saturday and Sunday as a battery of five defence lawyers cross-examined Maher Waked, a member of a committee which investigated the affairs of the bank, that was taken over by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) in August 1989 and ordered liquidated in April 1990.

Dr. Waked, the third witness to testify on the committee's findings, said that it was found that there was "gross mismanagement in the personal credit facilities offered by Petra Bank" which, for the first time in Jordan, introduced "plastic money" in the form of credit card operations in the early 1980s.

"The personal credit department appeared to be interested in only increasing the volume of business done rather than following prudent inspection of personal creditworthiness and

ability to repay," Dr. Waked said.

The Viscard section was part of a "Consumer Bank" set up by the management of Petra Bank, headed by Iraqi-born Ahmad Chalabi, the first defendant in the case and one of several accused who are being tried in absentia.

The capital of the Consumer Bank, according to Dr. Waked, was equal to if not more than the capital of Petra Bank itself. The Consumer Bank was headed by absentee defendant Jafar Agha, a nephew of Dr. Chalabi.

William Amireh, who headed Viscard operations, is one of the accused present in Jordan.

Dr. Chalabi, several members of his family and key defendants in the case refused to respond to court summons and are not represented in court.

The total losses suffered by the Consumer Bank could be between JD 8 million and JD 10 million — seen in Petra Bank books as consistent non-performing loans, Dr. Waked said.

"The loss through Viscard operations can never be known," he said.

Many of the holders of Viscard issued by Petra Bank were non-Jordanians who have left the country without settling their dues to the bank. Many Jordanians who had the card have immigrated, leaving unsettled bills behind, Dr. Waked said. He added that the

management failed on two counts: it did not care to check the credibility of the person to whom it issued the cards and it did not follow an efficient collection policy.

Part of the outstanding Viscard dues have been collected by the liquidators of Petra Bank under an incentive scheme which offered a 25 per cent write-off on dues settled before Aug. 20.

Mr. Amireh's lawyers sought to establish that the head of the operations had little say in setting Petra Bank or Consumer Bank policy and, therefore, should not be held accountable for the losses incurred.

Another "gross violation" of Jordanian banking regulations by the Chalabi management of Petra Bank was its acquisition of a percentage of Polish government debts, Dr. Waked said.

Fawzi Al Ali, an assistant general manager of Petra Bank under the Chalabi management, was involved in the deal and his signature appears in the documents related to the bank's purchase of Polish government debts, which totalled close to \$3 million at 47 cents to a dollar from the commercial market in London, according to Dr. Waked's testimony.

Mr. Ali's lawyers sought to prove in court that the transaction was conducted in good faith and the defendant's signature on the documents cannot be interpreted as deliberate complicity to violate Jordan's

banking code.

Jordanian regulations ban any Jordanian bank from engaging in such deals and, in this particular case, the Central Bank was not aware of the transaction until after the takeover of Petra Bank, Dr. Waked said.

Polish government debts were being sold in London in mid-1990 at 20 cents to a dollar and the current value of those held by Petra Bank is almost half that, according to economic experts.

The Chalabi management shipped out \$7 million to help troubled Paris-based Bank of Participation and Deposits under an elaborate deal entered with Wajih Tamraz, head of the defunct Al Mashrek Bank of Lebanon, while it was clear that the beneficiary bank was in dire financial straits and on the verge of collapse, according to Dr. Waked.

The infusion did not help the Paris bank and it collapsed soon afterwards, he said.

Under the deal, which involved a partial reciprocal deposit in Jordanian dinars with Petra Bank, the Chalabi management incurred a loss of over \$2.5 million, Dr. Waked said.

Defence lawyers Galeb Suleiman, Issam Sharif, Daoud Tuhaileh, Javed Dmour, Yacoub Far and Nabil Abu Gharbiyah cross-examined Dr. Waked on Saturday and Sunday. The hearing resumes Tuesday.



Crown Prince praises Bush for loan guarantee position

AMMAN (J.T.) — The success of the Middle East peace process depends on America's resolve to achieve progress towards a solution, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan was quoted as saying Sunday.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted the Crown Prince as referring in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to the peace conference due to be held in the coming month. He said that the critical question does not hinge on the date of such a conference as much as it is connected with the United States' pledge to participate in that conference.

Crown Prince Hassan commended President George Bush for threatening to resort to his veto to kill any attempt on the part of the U.S. Congress to grant Israel guarantees on loans needed to help settle Soviet Jews in Palestine.

Referring to Jordan's urgent needs at the moment, the Crown Prince said that such needs constitute an important element in the peace process, Petra said.

Petra quoted the BBC as saying that Jordan was facing a difficult economic situation with the return to the country of more than a quarter of a million workers from Kuwait.

Influx of expatriates raises population by 10 per cent

AMMAN (J.T.) — A report compiled by the Ministry of Planning and issued here Sunday announced that the influx into Jordan by hundreds of thousands of expatriates has increased by 10 per cent of the country's population.

Most of the returnees have settled in Amman and Zarqa, adding to the heavy burdens these two cities have been already facing because of the national population growth, which reached 3.5 per cent annually by the end of 1990, the report said.

In April, the National Population Commission announced that Jordan's population stood at almost 3.5 million by the end of 1990. The April report noted that the country's population was expected to be more than 5.5 million by the year 2005 given the current growth rate.

The Ministry of Planning said that the influx has had a negative impact on the national economy, whose performance has so far been linked to a great extent to those of the neighbouring countries, particularly Iraq and the Gulf states which served as Jordan's major markets.

According to the ministry's report, before the Gulf crisis Jordan used to export 40 per cent of its national products to Iraq and the Gulf states at the rate of 23

per cent to Iraq, 9 per cent to Saudi Arabia and 3 per cent to Kuwait. Jordan imported 85 per cent of its oil needs from Iraq and 15 per cent from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The closure of these markets and the return of the workers from Kuwait has adversely affected the country's balance of payments, the report said.

Together with this, the country's Gross National Product dropped by 9 per cent in the second half of 1990 as a result of a decline in the activities and exports of Jordanian industrial, commercial and tourism industries, the report added.

It said that the return of the expatriates has now raised the level of unemployment to nearly 20 per cent while the cost of living risen to 8.5 per cent over the first five months of 1991 compared with 4 per cent in the same period of 1990.

Referring to the socio-economic conditions of the expatriates returning to Jordan, the ministry's report said that 43 per cent of the returnees were students, 44 per cent of whom are under 15 years of age. It added that 57 per cent of the returnees have settled in Amman, 24 per cent in Zarqa and the rest in Irbid and other provinces.

The report noted that 80 per cent of the students have been admitted into government schools, 12.5 per cent to private schools and 7.5 per cent to schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The ministry's report predicted vast additional allocations in the 1992 fiscal budget to help the government cope with the huge increases in population and their needs in health, education and other services. The report said the government next year will need to allocate at least JD 17 million for health services, JD 13 million for education and JD 5 million for housing.

Substantial allocations will also be needed for capital expenditures to be spent on infrastructure such as roads, electricity, telephones and other networks.

To find work for the returnees, the government is expected to need at least JD 1.18 billion.

In a statement to Reuters news agency on Sept. 9, Minister of Planning Ziyad Fariz said Jordan would need at least \$4.5 billion within the next five years to cope with the huge population increases. Government statistics had estimated the number of returnees so far at 300,000 but said that more were coming.

Officials discuss Jordanian-Iranian relations, call for strengthening ties and promoting Islam

AMMAN (J.T.) — Iranian-Jordanian relations and scopes of cooperation between the two countries in a number of fields were reviewed here Sunday by an Iranian presidential envoy and Foreign Minister Abdullah Ensour.

The envoy, Mohammad Kazem, discussed the prospect of coordinating the process of continual consultations between Amman and Tehran vis-a-vis regional and international issues of common concern, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

It said that the two officials discussed the prospect of holding an

Islamic summit conference in Senegal before the end of 1991.

The envoy, who arrived here Saturday with a message to His Majesty King Hussein from Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, discussed means of promoting Jordanian-Iranian relations at all levels.

Mr. Kazem, who is the Iranian foreign minister's special advisor on Middle Eastern affairs, met earlier in the day with the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Latif Arabiyat. Mr. Kazem handed Dr. Arabiyat a message from the speaker of the Shura Council which contained

an invitation to Dr. Arabiyat to take part in an international conference on Palestine due to be held in Tehran in the coming month.

According to Petra, the four-day conference on Palestine will open on October 19 and will be attended by Arab, Islamic and other countries.

Discussing the subject of the conference, Dr. Arabiyat underlined the need for Muslims around the world to work towards supporting the Palestinian people and their intifada against Israeli occupation. He also referred to the Israeli expansionist

designs and said that Israel was continuously working towards obliterating the Arab and Islamic character of the occupied lands.

The Iranian envoy called for further strengthening of ties between Amman and Tehran. He said the fact that the international conference on Palestine is being held is a form of support for the Palestinian people and their just struggle.

Mr. Kazem also conveyed an Iranian government invitation to Dr. Arabiyat to visit Iran at the head of a Jordanian parliamentary delegation.

New health insurance plan introduced

AMMAN (J.T.) — The American Life Insurance Company (ALICO) has introduced a new health insurance plan, Recovery Benefit Plan, designed to offer financial assistance to the insured should they fall victim to dangerous diseases.

Under the new programme, ALICO offers a maximum of JD 30,000 to the injured if they suffer from cancer, kidney failure, blindness, angina pectoris or brain failure. Such diseases normally take a very long time in treatment and recuperation entailing financial problems.

It has been proved that every three out of five people are likely to suffer from the illnesses covered under this plan, an insurance official said.

"These diseases are not only

life threatening but can also lead to long periods of disability, hospitalisation and recuperation. In most cases, the illnesses cause severe financial problems due to medical expenses and loss of income," the official said.

ALICO, which started its operations in Jordan in 1958, provides JD 139 million insurance coverage for people insured in Jordan and its assets in the Kingdom are now estimated at JD 9 million.

ALICO, which is member of the American International Group of Insurance Companies, operates in 135 countries around the world. Its current world-wide assets are estimated at \$58 billion.

Government saved JD 25 million by introducing food coupons

AMMAN (J.T.) — Ration cards and food coupons introduced in September 1990 have helped control trading in basic food commodities and saved nearly JD 25 million for the Treasury, according to Ministry of Supply Secretary General Radi Ibrahim.

The government will continue to subsidise rice, sugar, powdered milk and bread and has now printed new forms of food coupons to be distributed to the public, Mr. Ibrahim said.

The introduction of the food coupons and the subsidised prices on these commodities has benefited Jordanian citizens, restaurants and confectioneries, Mr. Ibrahim said. He added that by restricting the subsidised food commodities to Jordanian citizens alone, the government, has thus saved JD 25 million. But, he said, the measures had also enabled the government to



control the trading in supplies and prevent any smuggling of food supplies outside the country.

Mr. Ibrahim said that the Ministry of Supply initially opened 600 centres for the distribution of cards and coupons but later reduced the number to 92.

Under the food rationing

system, coupons issued to Jordanian citizens are presented to stores where a customer can buy rice, sugar and milk at reduced rates.

Mr. Ibrahim said that a survey conducted in the country showed that the amounts allowed to each citizen at the reduced prices were sufficient. Each citizen is allowed one and half kilo of sugar and one and half kilo of rice each month and one kilo of powdered milk every four months under subsidised rates.

Food coupons were introduced shortly after the outbreak of the Gulf crisis when Jordan was flooded with nearly 800,000 refugees fleeing the Gulf area. No food shortages were reported because the government had built stock sufficient for at least six months. The rationing system was deemed necessary ensure stricter control on trading in food supplies.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ An exhibition of naive painting from Germany at Abdul Hameed Shouqan Foundation Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Omar Bawal at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of oil paintings and ceramics by Iraqi artists Nadim Muhsein, Haidi Mahdi and Halder Al Masrouf at Hotel Jordan International.
- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artist Salim Kanaan at the Royal Cultural Centre's Exhibition Hall.

FILM

- ★ French film entitled "Pierrot le Foe" at the French Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.

CONDOLENCES

The Editor and staff of the Jordan Times deeply mourn the passing of

Mr. Zuhair Ahmad

Brother of their friend and colleague Mr. Mohammad Ahmad, director general of the Jordan Press Foundation. May his soul rest in peace.

Organisation calls for closer ties between university researchers and industrial sector companies

KARAK (Petra) — The Jordanian Chamber of Commerce Federation held a meeting Sunday at Al Karak Chamber of Commerce and discussed difficulties facing the commercial sector in Jordan as well as proposed solutions.

Karak Governor Eid Al Qataneh, who attended the meeting, lauded the role of the commercial sector in developing and bolstering the national economy and reviewed Jordan's commercial role through history.

Chairman of the federation's Board of Directors, Mohammad Asfour reviewed the basic elements needed to achieve economic balance in accordance with the principles of supply and demand. He said this balance can be achieved by increasing national exports to adjust the balance of payments, increasing the private

sector's investments percentage to the gross domestic product and reducing the percentage of government spending in the gross domestic product.

Mr. Asfour said Jordanian industries are facing many difficulties. "Some of these difficulties lie within the industrial sector, some are caused by rules and regulations, administrative procedures, lack of raw material and difficulties in marketing Jordanian products abroad," he said.

He affirmed that the Jordanian economy will overcome the current economic crisis resulting from the return of Jordanian expatriates from Kuwait and other Gulf states.

Jordan, Mr. Asfour said, will be able to absorb the skilled labour coming from the Gulf states and will be able to benefit

from the returnees' capabilities. He called on the government to guarantee the return of the expatriates deposits, to enable them to contribute to the Kingdom's economic growth.

In another development, Mr. Asfour and federation members visited Muta University, near Karak, where they met with the university's acting president, Abdul Rahman Atiyat.

Dr. Atiyat underlined the role of the university in serving the local society and Jordan through continued interaction with the public and private sectors.

The vice-president stressed the importance of promoting ties between the economic sector and researchers at Jordanian universities as a way to encourage scientific research to improve Jordanian industrial products.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Association resolves election problem

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Daghmi Sunday met with members of the Jordan Petrochemical Association and discussed with them the dispute over the election of the Amman branch of the association. Mr. Daghmi stressed that his ministry will not recognise any elections unless it is provided with complete information on the association's budget, its membership and subscriptions. During the meeting, an agreement was signed by the association and workers in the drug industries under which elections will be postponed for one month during which eligible workers can subscribe and pay their fees to the association, thus having the right to vote and to be elected.

PSD director leaves for meetings

AMMAN (Petra) — Public Security Department Director General Maj. Gen. Fadel Ali Fuhaid Sunday left for Tunis at the head of a PSD delegation to take part in the meeting of Arab Police directors, due to be held there today. The three-day meeting will discuss issues about the role of public security in countering disasters and addressing issues like manipulation of prices, monopoly of commodities and conservation of the environment.

Foreign minister to meet press

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdullah Ensour Monday meets with Jordanian press representatives to review with them various local regional and international issues, including the efforts currently being made to convene an international peace conference. The meeting will take place at the Jordan Press Association premises.

Delegation to take part in symposium

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman Chamber of Industry will take part in a symposium on recruitment of the disabled and integrating them in the various work departments due to start in Cairo today. Taking part in the symposium, which is organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), will be representatives from eight countries from western Asia. The ACI delegation will present a working paper on Jordan's experience in the field of employing disabled persons in various government and private institutions. The ACI's delegation is made up of Dr. Abdul Noor Habaybeh and Ali Dajani.

Study finds oil safe

AMMAN (Petra) — A study undertaken by the Royal Scientific Society's Environmental Research Centre has found that oil used in electric generators and condensers, which are in operation at various stations in the Greater Amman area, is free from any chemicals, posing no threat to people and the environment. The study was aimed at finding out whether the oil used in generators and condensers contains chemical components posing a danger to man and the environment.

Iraq seeks remains

(Continued from page 1)

U.S.-led coalition forces dislodged the Iraqi army from Kuwait, which Iraq had occupied in its Aug. 2, 1990, invasion.

Newsday quoted Lon Maggart, who led the first brigade in the assault, as saying he understood that the tactic sounded "pretty nasty."

But he added, according to the paper, "it would have been even nastier if we had to put our troops in the trenches and clean them out with bayonets."

No American was killed in the operation, but the Iraqi death toll was estimated in the thousands, Newsday said.

A U.N. nuclear weapons inspection team visited a research institute near Baghdad Sunday at the start of a week-long stay in Iraq.

Team leader Leslie Thorne, from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, told reporters the group would confine its mission to the one nuclear centre. He declined to identify it.

The 14-member group, which arrived in the Iraqi capital on Saturday, is the fifth nuclear inspection mission to visit the country under the terms of the Gulf war ceasefire, which orders Baghdad to declare and destroy all weapons of mass destruction.

On Friday, Iraq bitterly attacked the leader of last month's fourth nuclear mission as motivated by political not technical aims.

It said American David Kay's report had not been "complete or scientific." During that team's visit, Iraq disclosed eight kilograms of irradiated uranium it had hidden from previous inspectors and Mr. Kay said its uranium enrichment programme could not have been for peaceful purposes.

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Weekly Political Pulse

Bourguiba's words come back to us

By Walid Sadi

NEARLY a quarter of a century ago, Palestinians and other Arabs, who spoke in favour of accepting the U.N. partition plan for Palestine, were arbitrarily accused of a variety of treacheries ranging from defeatism and capitulation to even being Zionist agents. Some were even gunned down.

In the aftermath of the disastrous 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the recommendations of such "national outcasts" suddenly became the epitome of national aspirations. This cycle in Palestinian and Arab perspectives and interpretation of postures towards the Palestinian case in particular, continues till these bitter days as if little or nothing has been learned from past confusion between national honour and national suicide.

When former U.S. President Jimmy Carter visited Amman a couple of years ago, he raised doubts to a number of Jordanian journalists who met with him whether any of them had really read the Camp David accords which had caused consternation to the whole Arab World. In Mr. Carter's estimations, what the Arab side was accepting thereafter was inferior to what he had proposed in the peace treaty between Cairo and Tel Aviv in 1979. He was referring specifically to former U.S. President Ronald Reagan's 1982 peace initiative which the Arab World then hailed as a milestone in the quest for a just and permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflicts including the Palestine question.

Now once again the Palestinians are torn between the option of

rejecting any peace settlement that falls short of their eroding sense of what is honourable and just and the available alternative of salvaging as much as can be salvaged before it is too late and then try to build on it in accordance with the historic advice of former Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba back in 1966. It will be remembered that the Tunisian leader had counselled the Palestinian people then to "take what is available and then ask for more." Mr. Bourguiba's sermon clearly drew heavily on the Jewish tactics throughout their contemporary history to construct their own state on Palestinian lands. Ironically speaking, Mr. Bourguiba's words were made just a year prior to the 1967 war which changed everything in the Middle East including the Arab and Palestinian criteria for what is acceptable and what is not.

It would be presumptuous to make the argument now, and with the benefit of hindsight, that had the Palestinians considered Mr. Bourguiba's advice, they would not be in the mess they find themselves in today. Yet the words of Mr. Bourguiba must surely still ring loud and persist to haunt the Palestinians and their leadership at this critical juncture in the search for a permanent resolution to the Palestinian problem. The Palestinians are indeed at a crossroad: either to play ball in the game offered to them or risk losing all. Under the prevailing Arab and international conditions no one can seriously entertain the stance of aiming for all or nothing. That luxury has long been abandoned for something

more reachable and perhaps less honourable.

Just like what separates beauty from ugliness or wisdom from insanity is a thin line, so is the distinction between what is honourable and treacherous. The national responsibility that is necessarily involved in making supreme decisions on behalf of the Palestinians and their cause is indeed awesome and fraught with untold dangers and challenges. No one can envy the Palestinian leadership over its agony over which way to turn. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat himself had warned that the non-convening of peace talks on the Palestinian situation would necessarily mean the near complete Judaisation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip including of course East Jerusalem.

It is infinitely easier to reject the challenges of the peace negotiations than to enter them especially when the end of the tunnel is nowhere within sight. It takes less courage and responsibility to escape the dangers of any peace inferno. On the other hand, the decision to engage one's enemy in negotiations in order to probe at a closer range what can be rescued from its designs is a supreme national responsibility that cannot be avoided forever, especially when the alternatives are few or non-existent. It seems on the balance that what Mr. Bourguiba had counselled more than 25 years ago is still as valid as ever. The Arabs did not heed his opinion then and lost a great deal. Not heeding his words now could mean the loss of even more.

The law, above all

THE ACCUSATION levelled against the government by a number of Lower House deputies that some members of the "Prophet" Mohammad's Army who were detained in connection with certain terrorist acts committed in the country had been tortured or ill-treated deserves full investigation, in line with our democratic achievements and practices over the past three years. This is a very serious charge that cannot now be brushed aside even though it may never be substantiated. The predominantly Islamist members of Parliament that brought these allegations cannot be let off the hook so easily and the only credible way for the country to lay to rest such assertions is to conduct a thorough investigation of the entire issue by an independent body composed of representatives of the three branches of government.

The weakness of the government's refutation of these charges stems first and foremost from the fact that it was based on a report by the public prosecutor's office. It is indeed unorthodox in such situations to leave the entire matter in the hands of the public prosecutor to investigate since he is always suspect of impartiality. Last week, the minister of interior, Mr. Jawdat Shoul, issued a statement categorically denying any knowledge of the detainees in question ever being tortured or ill-treated, and he based his verdict on the report prepared by the public prosecutor. The minister would have put himself in a much stronger position had he ordered a thorough investigation of the matter, especially after the Public Freedoms Committee of the Lower House had taken up the issue and made a series of recommendations that may or may not be justified or necessary. As things went, however, the matter was left to simmer and in the process became even more compounded. In the process the image of the country as an operational democracy was left open for manipulation by those who do not wish us success in making further inroads into democratisation and progress.

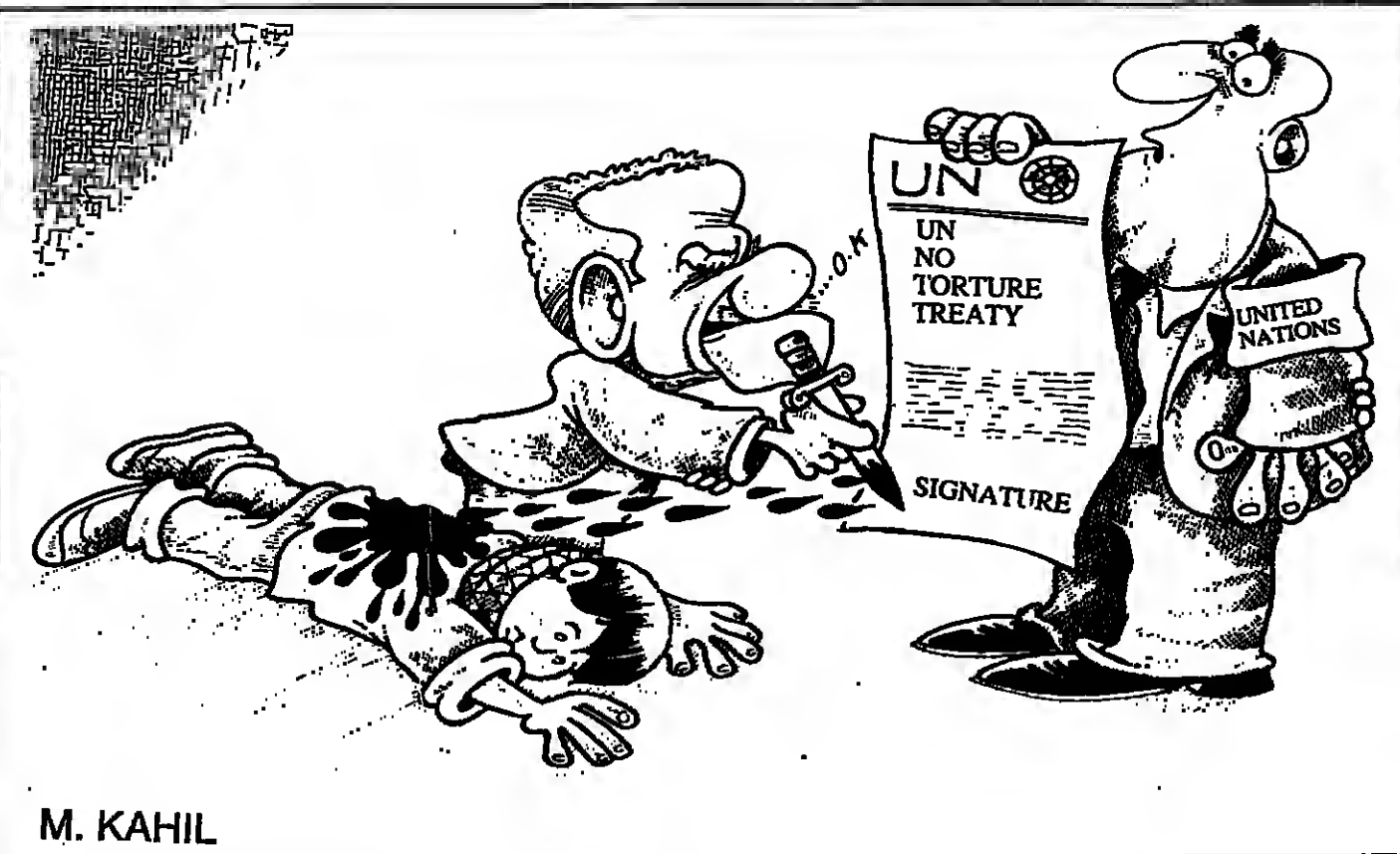
As Jordan has taken a solemn decision to sign and ratify the International Convention against Torture, it behooves us to prepare the groundwork for such a giant step by uprooting any lingering doubts about the record of the country on any human rights violations. Indeed the country's reputation as torture-free has won us acclaim from all corners of the world. The government owes it to itself to respond to the charges effectively and properly. The way it chose to react on this one leaves a great deal to be desired.

This is not to suggest that terrorist groups or criminals must be left free to roam the streets of Amman or elsewhere to commit their heinous crimes. The country must never drift to the extent that some countries had gone in defence of civil liberties and end up with criminals free to commit their crimes again and again. Rather, what is called for is fair play in the detention and prosecution of people accused of flouting the criminal laws of the country. Jordan is blessed with sufficient legal safeguards to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. All that is called for is the full application of the law of the land fairly and professionally.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

DESPITE the American president's firm stand in the face of the Zionist lobby over the question of granting guarantees for Israeli loans, it is hard to believe that the U.S. administration will be able to twist the Israeli government's arm over the question of giving up occupied land or recognising the rights of the Palestinian people, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. The Arabs would very much like to see President Bush forcing the Israeli government into accepting the international legitimacy and implement U.N. Security Council resolutions, but it should be emphasised that one cannot be carried away with optimism because of the superficial dispute between the two allies over the question of loan guarantees, advised the paper. In view of the coming tour by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in the region and his talks with the leaders of Israel and the Arab states one can only wait and see whether the firm U.S. administration stand in the loan guarantees issue would have its effect on the outcome of Mr. Baker's talks in Israel, the paper noted. It said that every time Mr. Baker is on a visit here, Israel defies the U.S. administration by announcing plans to go ahead with building settlements against the American desire. It is indeed interesting to see whether Israel would pursue its open defiance of the world community. The Arabs should not remain idle in the meantime, said the paper, but should concert their steps and unite stands to face the coming stage.

WHAT is the use of having 10 private or government universities when most of the students are unable to join them, asked Fakhri Kawar in his column published by Al Ra'i daily Sunday. The writer said that since the private universities charge exorbitant fees and accept only those who passed the tawjihi examinations with at least 60 per cent grades, only a limited number of students, especially the very rich, can acquire higher education. The writer implied that since the universities aim to make a fortune from their services, there can be no question about them being commercial establishments and not educational institutions. He said that in Egypt there are 10 universities which cater to the needs of 55 million people, but in Jordan 10 universities do not suffice four million people's desire to acquire higher education. The writer said that the ordinary citizens cannot offer higher education to their children under the present circumstances and it is up to the concerned authorities to see to it that education should be a chance given to all students wishing to learn.



M. KAHIL

Rights group condemns abuses in Kuwait

The following is the text of the Middle East Watch press announcement about its report released September 11 dealing with the human rights situation in Kuwait.

SIX months after the liberation of Kuwait, the thirst to avenge the horrors of the Iraqi occupation continues to spawn a new round of human rights victims — this time at Kuwaiti hands, according to a 63-page report issued today by Middle East Watch, a division of the New York-based Human Rights Watch. The report entitled a Victory Turned Sour: Human Rights in Kuwait Since Liberation, charges that despite the prominent role played by calls to defend human rights in rallying support for the war against Iraq, the reinstated Kuwaiti government has trampled on those rights at nearly every turn, often with the use of violence. Murder, torture, arbitrary detention and unlawful deportation have been the tools of this campaign of vengeance.

The pretext for these abuses is a government-inspired quest to root out those who collaborated with the Iraqi occupiers and to restructure Kuwaiti society in a fashion that is deemed more reliable politically. The victims, almost uniformly long-term residents of Kuwait, are principally Palestinians, Iraqis and the stateless Arabs known as Bedouins. The assessment of Kuwaiti human rights practices since liberation is based on two fact-finding missions to Kuwait, extensive telephone interviews with residents of Kuwait, and research by Kuwaiti human rights monitors. Middle East Watch has previously documented Iraqi abuses in occupied Kuwait and condemned them in a number of reports.

The report notes that the nature of post-liberation abuses in Kuwait has changed over time. The violence of the early months of liberation has increasingly been supplanted by an inhumane and illegal deportation process which threatens to accelerate in light of a governmental decree that all residency permits for non-Kuwaiti citizens will expire at the end of October. Meanwhile, torture and arbitrary detention continue at a disturbing rate.

Among the report's findings are:

- Scores are known to have been killed at the hands of Kuwaiti forces, some of whom may be among the 54 unidentified bodies of victims of post-liberation killings found in a series of mass graves in Al Riqqa cemetery.

Although the Kuwaiti government has attempted to blame individuals beyond its control, most of these killings were committed by official security forces or irregular armed groups working closely with them.

- The highest levels of the Kuwaiti government are complicit in these killings in that they have yet to arrest or prosecute any of those responsible, in notable contrast to the vigour with which the government has pursued perceived collaborators with the Iraqi occupiers. Nor have exhumations or any other form of investigation been ordered into the mass graves containing unidentified victims of post-liberation violence. To the contrary, the periodic government calls to cleanse Kuwait of a presumed fifth column have, if anything, further inspired this violence.

- While the incidence of killing has diminished since the initial months following liberation, arbitrary detention and torture remain at troublingly high levels. Torture takes place in a variety of government detention centres, abetted by official tolerance of long-term incommunicado detention and the absence of any prosecution of those responsible for violence against prisoners. Severe beatings with fists and clubs are the most common form of abuse, but other techniques include electric shock, burns with cigarettes and other hot items, rape, and the denial of food and water. Some of the torture was designed to elicit confessions, of the sort regularly introduced during the martial-law trials of suspected collaborators, but much of the torture was applied simply as an instrument of collective punishment against random members of disfavoured nationalities.

- The charges that passed for trials before the martial-law tribunals charged with judging suspected collaborators fell far short of international fair-trial standards to which Kuwait itself has subscribed, including Article 75 of the First Additional Protocol to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. One hundred and eighteen were sentenced to long prison terms. Among the due-process deficiencies cited were the routine introduction of confessions coerced through torture, the denial of the rights to consult with counsel before interrogation, the penalisation of conduct that was not clearly proscribed by preexisting criminal law, the unjustified use of trial in absentia, the lack of appeal, and an assumption that non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait owed the same duty of loyalty to the Kuwaiti government-in-exile

as did citizens. Apart from committing all death sentences to life imprisonment, the informal clemency review process reaffirmed all convictions, reflecting a lack of meaningful scrutiny.

- Relatively few of those detained since liberation have even been brought to trial. At least 5,800 have been detained in the six months since liberation, of which at least 3,000 remain in detention today. Roughly one-third are in custody pending deportation; most of the remainder are being held without any formal charge having been filed against them, including at least 300 incarcerated in incommunicado detention. Another 300 are awaiting trials, apparently scheduled to resume this month, before state-security courts with a track record that is little better than that of the martial-law courts.

- Deportations of long-term residents began shortly after liberation accelerated during the summer months and threaten to reach a crescendo when all residency permits expire, by government decree, at the end of October. Legal protections contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention, which Kuwait has ratified, have been systematically flouted in the process of summarily deporting Palestinians, Iraqis and Bedouins. Stateless Bedouins and Palestinians have been expelled without any provision being made for their safe resettlement.
- Ensure that would-be deportees are given an opportunity to contest their expulsion before an independent tribunal and to take care of their financial personal affairs before leaving the country.
- Permit all "protected persons" under the Geneva conventions (including all Bedouins, Palestinians and Iraqis) to work, or provide support to their dependent families.
- Put an end to the collective punishment of the Bedouin, Iraqi and Palestinian communities, specifically by:
 1. Providing the three communities with protection against torture and arbitrary arrest and detention.
 2. Immediately allowing the repatriation to Kuwait of the former Bedouin residents of Kuwait who are stranded in Iraq and in the displaced persons camp at the Abdali border post.
 3. Removing all barriers to employment by legal residents of Kuwait.
 4. Providing back and severance pay to employees of the Kuwaiti government who are not Kuwaiti citizens on equal terms with their Kuwaiti counterparts.
 5. Safeguarding all property of those who have fled Kuwait and facilitating the owners' efforts to retrieve such property.

that might tarnish that endeavor, the administration has acted far more as a defender of the Kuwaiti government — rebutting human rights criticisms and actively seeking to deflect attention from Kuwaiti abuses — than as a government intent on living up to the human rights principles which formed part of the rallying cry for war with Iraq.

In its report, Middle East Watch calls on the Kuwaiti government to:

- Put an end to extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, and to give a full accounting of all those who were killed in custody, disappeared, or were buried without identification in mass graves since liberation.

- Release all those who have not been formally charged or against whom there is no evidence of wrongdoing.

- Allow those to be tried before state-security courts to consult with counsel before interrogation begins.

- Discontinue the use as evidence of confessions extracted through coercion.

- Stop deporting Bedouins, and stop deporting refugees or stateless Palestinians without provision being made for their safe resettlement.

- Ensure that would-be deportees are given an opportunity to contest their expulsion before an independent tribunal and to take care of their financial personal affairs before leaving the country.

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Doubts emerge over December deadline for new EC treaty

By Andres Wolberg-Stok
Reuter

BRUSSELS — As centrifugal forces draw states apart in Eastern Europe, the European Community is wondering whether it can meet a December deadline to achieve the opposite effect — economic and political union.

Diplomats say the odds appear to have grown in the past few days because of rising friction at the two inter-governmental conferences mapping the way to closer union.

"The longer this drags on, the harder it gets," said one official involved in the community's treaty talks.

A new paper on political union written by the Netherlands, current EC president, is being lambasted by other states given a sneak preview.

New Dutch plans for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were torn to shreds at a meeting of finance ministers on Monday.

"It looks as if they (the Dutch) had done it on purpose to antagonise everybody," one diplomat said.

The summit in the Dutch town of Maastricht in December may well be the last chance for agreement on a single currency and a common foreign and security policy among the present 12 member states.

If this deadline is missed, the EC would find it politically difficult to continue pretending it has not noticed the growing queue of applicants beating a path to its door from the east.

Instead of concentrating on building monetary and foreign policy muscle, the bloc would

suddenly be staring in the face the unpleasant question of how to redesign its existing procedures so that 24 or more members could agree on anything.

EC leaders decided in Rome last December that Maastricht must see the signing of a new treaty to take the bloc far beyond the single market due to be in place by 1993.

"It's goodbye Maastricht," one diplomat said after the Netherlands late last week started floating its revised draft for political union.

"They're never going to be able to get agreement in time."

In part, the problem lies with the sheer complexity of the grand plans to forge a European union. Sovereignty in foreign affairs, the ability of countries to manage their own money and ultimately decide their own fate are at stake.

But, to a large extent, the problem is simply one of time.

For over two months, EC leaders and ministers have had to focus on the implications of a civil war simmering in Yugoslavia and lately on the collapse of the Soviet Union.

EC foreign ministers, who are supposed to steer the political union talks and oversee EMU negotiations, have met five times in the three weeks since the attempted Soviet coup.

Racing between capitals, they have had little time to ponder non-urgent issues.

Even their aides concede that much of their agenda is taken up with concocting initiatives and results that can be presented to public opinion after the next meeting.

LETTERS

Don't they ever kiss?

To the Editor:

I'm fed up!

Rarely does something annoy me to the point where I feel compelled to sit down and write about it. No, it isn't the latest men's hair fashions or the new brand of "defensive driving" which Amman's taxi drivers seemed to have discovered. It's something much more personal. Much more meaningful.

First, an example. I was sitting at home the other night and on comes one of the most romantic movies I have ever seen. Now, don't get me wrong. I am not what one would consider a romantic by any stretch of the imagination. Still, when there's a good movie on, even such I'm-so-tough-I-only-shower-once-a-week guys like myself can occasionally muster up a tear or two.

Back to my point. I was sitting home watching this wonderful movie and this gentleman (I shall call him Romeo) in the picture was wining and dining this most lovely of human creatures (Juliet sounds appropriate here). As the magical moment approached, their eyes locked and the background music stirred the audience with anticipation. Realising what was about to happen, I sat up at attention and wet my lips, waiting for that wonderful, glorious, once-in-a-lifetime moment — the first kiss.

As he gently caressed her red cheeks and their heads began to move forward, I waited for the fireworks to begin. Then, out of nowhere, bam!! They're drawing away from each other — Romeo with a satisfied look and Juliet with this wow-what-a-kisser expression on her face.

My friends tell me that the censors at Jordan Television cut out all the kissing scenes they can get their hands on. Now, let's be serious folks. Are we that paranoid that even simple kissing scenes aren't allowed on our television screens? I think not. Especially when you consider that you can see a lot more than kissing in some of these cheap, dingy theatres around Amman.

I understand that some things need to be kept out of our living rooms. What I don't understand is why someone at Jordan Television gets to make that decision for me. If I am upset or repulsed by something on the screen, I will simply turn off the TV set. While most people who know me would argue otherwise, I think I have an IQ higher than five and am, therefore, capable of reaching over to the off button.

So, to the censors at Jordan Television: Give us a break guys. Leave nature to worry about itself.

Nidal Ibrahim,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Handwritten signature: *فهد*

Israeli ministers assail Bush

(Continued from page 1)

guarantees, and may seek a compromise.

Mr. Shamir's top political adviser, Yossi Ben-Aharon, said: "If there is such an offer, we will discuss it and the government will decide."

Israeli opinion is particularly incensed at Mr. Bush for portraying himself as a lonely individual fighting a powerful pro-Israel lobby, and for his version of the link between the Gulf war and Israel, which runs counter to what most Israelis believe.

Criticism, both official and in newspapers and radio talk shows, cut across party lines.

Mordechai Gur, a former cabinet minister for the left-leaning Labour Party, said Mr. Bush's remarks contained "sharp anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli overtones."

Another hardliner, Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan, said Israel should forego the loan guarantees altogether.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, architect of the drive to increase Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, told the cabinet that Israel should retaliate by boycotting the peace conference, Israel Radio said.

Mr. Shamir urged the ministers to refrain from public comment on the issue, the radio said. Mr. Arens told Israel TV Israel would stick with the peace process regardless of the loan guarantees.

Cabinet sources said Foreign Minister Levy warned his colleagues against "an escalation of the verbal attacks." Mr. Levy reportedly accused the ministers who attacked Mr. Bush of "losing their heads and their way."

The loan guarantees would entitle Israel to borrow money at preferential rates to settle a wave of immigrants. It expects some one million Soviet Jews by the

middle of the decade.

Mr. Bush had asked Israel to delay the loan guarantee request until the peace conference, tentatively planned for next month. After Israel formally presented the request, Mr. Bush threatened to veto the guarantees if put to Congress during a 120-day moratorium.

Sources present at the cabinet session quoted Mr. Shamir as calling on ministers to avoid rhetoric that could worsen already sour relations between the Jewish state and its guardian ally.

"We will not retreat, we will stick by our position. But we should calm the atmosphere and watch our words," Mr. Shamir was quoted as telling the ministers.

Health Minister Ehud Olmert, a Shamir ally, reiterated that Israel would attend a peace conference though it regarded the issue of "humanitarian aid" separate from peace moves.

But he denied that Mr. Shamir would consider any compromise to end the dispute that might be offered by Mr. Baker on his seventh Middle East mission since the Gulf war.

"We have put in our request and there can be no change in the basic attitude of Israel," Mr. Olmert told reporters.

"There is a danger when the United States says that the loan guarantees can interfere with the peace process...it can certainly encourage Arab countries to raise all sorts of demands in the future," he said.

Mr. Olmert questioned the sincerity of Mr. Bush's claim to be Israel's friend.

"The key refrain in all his remarks is, 'I am a friend of Israel'...those who must declare friendship arouse suspicion and I have been suspicious for a long time now," he said.

Hopes fade for quick release

(Continued from page 1)

has denied agreeing to free them.

In Bonn, a spokesman for Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher declined to speculate on whether Mr. Sharaa was coming to discuss the hostages.

"We are talking to all parties concerned and we have requested the release of all hostages," he said.

The ministry said Mr. Sharaa would hold talks with Mr. Genscher Monday as part of a regular exchange of views agreed on when Mr. Genscher visited Damascus in February. According to a statement, Mr. Sharaa and Mr. Genscher would discuss "the situation in the Middle East, the state of the Middle East peace process and bilateral questions."

Israel's chief hostage negotiator will meet U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar in Paris within a few days in an attempt to end the hostage saga, Israel's biggest newspaper said Sunday.

The defence ministry declined comment on the report in the daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

The paper quoted political sources as saying Uri Lubrani, the defence ministry official negotiating for the return of six missing Israeli servicemen, had left for Europe at the weekend.

It said he would go to Paris to meet Mr. Perez de Cuellar.

The paper said Mr. Lubrani would hear from Mr. Perez de Cuellar on the fate of missing Israeli navigator Ron Arad, cap-

tured when his plane was downed in 1986.

Israel believes Mr. Arad is held by Iran or pro-Iranian guerrillas. The U.N. chief held talks in Iran earlier this week.

Lebanese guerrillas want Israel to release some 300 Arab prisoners still held after it freed 51 last week. Israel allowed an expelled Palestinian activist to return home Friday in exchange for the remains of a missing Israeli soldier.

The failure of groups holding up to 10 Western hostages to announce an imminent release added to fears of a delay.

Asked what might have caused a delay, a diplomat in Beirut said, "it could be any one of a thousand things. This is far from an exact science and people are tempted to come up with last-minute demands."

Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bweiz said in Tehran that a conclusive solution to the hostage issue would help Lebanon to solve several domestic problems, Tehran Radio reported. Several Western nations have tied economic aid to Lebanon to a release of Western hostages.

Mr. Bweiz was in Iran on a mission to improve ties with the Islamic republic. The issue of the hostages was discussed because Iran has influence over Shiite fundamentalists who hold Western hostages.

The Iranian foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, called for all parties to cooperate with Mr. Perez de Cuellar in an effort to solve the hostage crisis.

Our responsibility to create a better world

By Princess Basma

The following is the text of a speech delivered by Princess Basma last month at the Global Cooperation House in London, which was established by Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

THE theme of my talk tonight is on "our responsibility to create a better world." I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on this target to which I am sure, all of us present here tonight have devoted most of our lives.

First of all let me please share with you what I mean by a "better world" — it is a vision of a future in which our global family would be emotionally happier, physically healthier, with its qualitative welfare more equitably shared than it is today or at any time in the past; all this to be achieved while preserving our environment and conserving our natural endowments. So a better world is one in which we can achieve sustainable development that is more equitable and environmentally benign.

And it is a global family in a global village that our universe is developing towards today. Since the last few years the information age has dawned on us enabling

worldwide instant dissemination of knowledge, communication of news and information and encounter among people and cultures. As in the traditional village, where everybody knows and assists everybody else, grievances are shared, needs are collectively addressed and cooperation is imperative in order to achieve the public good and avoid conflicts of interest. So should our global village be developing towards today, but is it?

In order to create a better world in such a transparent universe we have to narrow the disparities which exist today between the North and the South, between those who have and others who have not, and to sustain a global development with economic growth. Much attention has been focused during the last few years, and rightly so, on how all this can be done with environmental preservation. Tonight, without me ignoring this or any other relevant issue, I would like to concentrate on the important issue of child care.

Let us remember that the future belongs to our children and in order to create a better world those should be the prime target of our attention. Whereas the societies of the North matured, with half of the population now

above 45 years old, the population of the South is still very young and many nations have half of its population fifteen years old or younger. It is their welfare and upbringing which should be our target in order to arrive at a better future.

It is childhood, particularly the first few pre-school years after birth, that shapes the future of the human being more than any other period in his life. These are the formative years on which we must concentrate our utmost attention and it is these same years which are still, unfortunately, very much neglected in many societies of the South, where most of the emphasis was, and still is, placed on schools and post-school education. The planners' belief was that schools and eradication of illiteracy would narrow the development gap; no doubt some progress in education has taken place, however the results, till today, have not lived up to our ambitions. An aspiration for a better future warrants a modification of this strategy by more emphasis on child care and pre-school upbringing.

Therefore our responsibility to create a better world rests with our attention and success in caring for our children, particularly

in the first few formative years of their age. The stage for this is the family and its surroundings. Nutrition and its availability, is essential to develop the physical and mental health of the newly born child. Family care and love are needed for the child's serene development, and kindergarten facilities are essential to sharpen his interest and develop his innovative capabilities.

During the last thirty years the world, particularly the specialised U.N. agencies and funds, have gathered a wealth of knowledge and experience on development. Huge amounts were invested during the seventies and eighties, on the infrastructure and other high capital intensive projects, some of which with mediocre results that only burdened the South with debt. The North-South gap, if anything, is not narrowing. This experience has recently dawned on us and sobered us proving once more the fundamental fact that it is the human being that should be the primary target of our investment and attention. In order to achieve a better world it is "human development" rather than "infrastructure development" that should be the primary centre of our attention and investment.

Through recent advances in

medicine, most of the preventable child diseases are treated with remarkable reduction in infant mortality. However, these medical advances were not matched by similar improvements to the quality of life of child and mother in many countries. Till this very day, malnutrition, underweight and lack of basic needs are common features of childhood in many countries of the South, with female-male disparities in education and other opportunities are still not uncommon. Till this very day, more than one quarter of all women in the world suffer from nutritional anaemia and a quality of life below human dignity. This is an appalling situation which we should not allow to continue. Our responsibility to create a better world demands that we work collectively to change and improve all this.

This, of course, requires investment and funds which most countries on our globe cannot afford. Luckily our universe is now moving from division and conflict to understanding, from totalitarianism to pluralism and

from narrow local interests to global concerns. All this dispenses with the huge investment which was destined to be wasted on armaments and releases enormous resources for global development which should be recycled mainly into child care and environment preservation. We have to seize this opportunity.

Therefore, experience of the last three decades, our responsibility for a better future is to perceive and avail ourselves of the newly evolving world order to channel the funds released by the new era of détente and global understanding to where it can pay the highest dividends: human development, particularly child care.

Our vision and responsibility for a better world rests with the children of today. It is for their welfare, promotion and future that we meet tonight to inaugurate the "Global Co-operation House." This house which I am sure will devote much of its modest material resources, but very rich spiritual endowment, towards this vision.

Saddam seen as tightening grip on power

By Rawhi Abaidoh
Kerter

NICOSIA — By sacking the man who pledged to work for political pluralism, President Saddam Hussein has tightened his grip on the ruling Baath Party by placing kinsmen and other henchmen in top posts.

Iraqi exiles in Europe said on Saturday the dismissal of Saddam Hammadi as prime minister and member of the eight-man Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) was a blow to pledges of democracy and economic liberalisation following Iraq's defeat in the Gulf war.

"Hammadi was the only firm advocate of pluralism. He was courageous enough to call a

spade a spade," one said.

Mr. Saddam was his own prime minister until the appointment of Mr. Hammadi nearly months ago at the height of the failed Shiite rebellion in southern Iraq.

The exiles say Mr. Hammadi's sacking, following a two-day meeting of the Baath Party on Friday night, meant that Mr. Saddam felt confident enough of his authority to purge the party and government of figures who might have challenged his rule.

The Baath (Arabic for renaissance) Party has ruled Iraq as the sole unchallenged party since 1968.

"The collapse of the Kurdish and Shiite rebellions and the failure of the West to unseat him has given Mr. Saddam a new lease of

life," one exile said.

Baghdad Television said the party reelected Mr. Saddam, who has led Iraq since 1979, as its secretary-general. Mr. Hammadi's dismissal was due to lack of support in Baath Party elections, it said.

Mr. Saddam replaced Mr. Hammadi with a fellow Shiite, Mohammed Hamza Al Zubeidi, apparently to please Iraq's majority but largely powerless Shiite Muslim sect. But he also sacked Hassan Ali Nassar, another Shiite in the Sunni Muslim-dominated RCC.

The sources said Mr. Zubeidi, former minister of communications and transport was a political lightweight who owed his position solely to Mr. Saddam's patronage.

Mr. Hammadi, a veteran politician with more than 25 years experience of high office, was appointed in March in what was seen as an attempt to tackle Iraq's chronic economic problems and to broaden government support following the twin revolts.

The exiles and diplomats described 60-year-old Hammadi, educated by U.S. academics, as one of the few highly intellectual politicians in Iraq.

"It is seen as no coincidence that even for a man with as broad Western contacts, no headway has been made in breaching Iraq's international isolation during his term in office," a Baghdad-based diplomat said.

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Foreign Exchange Market Summary (September 9, September 13, 1991)

In a weak performance, the dollar dropped significantly Monday and went on to fluctuate within narrow ranges for the rest of the week. The U.S. currency was pressured by continued expectations of adverse U.S. economic reports due later in the week, and a related or unrelated discount rate cut by the Fed. The dollar declined mainly against European currencies as the market believed that a dollar interest rate cut will be matched by a corresponding move in Japan. The dollar thus ended the week an average of 1.44 per cent lower against European currencies, and 0.65 per cent lower against the yen.

In a carryover from the previous Friday, the dollar dropped Monday mainly against the European currencies. The dollar's drop through several support levels Friday, was followed by a break through 1.70 marks Monday triggering a wave of further dollar selling.

The dollar rose marginally Tuesday closing in New York at what was to be its highest closing level of the week at 1.6938 marks, 1.7290 dollars to the sterling pound and at 134.75 yen. But the dollar's rise was limited as the market continued to await the release of U.S. economic reports later in the week, and for the Fed to lower interest rates.

The U.S. currency closed weaker in subdued, directionless trading Wednesday, while traders started to realise that an 0.5 per cent cut in the discount rate was already factored into dollar exchange rates. Thus expectations started to evolve of a rise in dollar rates if interest rates are lowered, as traders cover short positions and take their profits, but which will be followed by another wave of dollar selling later.

Thursday took the U.S. currency to its lowest closing levels of the week against most major European currencies. It closed at 1.6860 marks, having closed at its lowest level against the pound sterling the previous day at 1.7340 dollars to the pound. The drop followed the release of U.S. weekly money supply data revealing a major drop of \$9.7 billion in M2.

Friday's trading session came in accordance with market expectations, taking the dollar slightly higher against European currencies at the New York close, but at its lowest closing rate against the yen. A mere 0.2 per cent rise in August U.S. consumer prices, and a 0.7 per cent drop in August Retail Sales, combined with the drop in M2 to encourage the Fed to lower its discount rate by 0.5 per cent to 5.00 per cent. The Federal Funds rate dropped by 0.25 per cent to 5.25 per cent as a consequence. As previously expected, the dollar rallied as a wave of short covering ensued. But the U.S. currency dropped again, before rebounding at the close, on expectations of a further interest cut to stimulate faltering U.S. consumer spending, in view of the negative picture painted by the recent economic data including Thursday's money supply figures.

Expectations for this week's dollar performance remain dim, particularly with the widening of the dollar/mark yield gap to more than 3.50 per cent. Some observers maintained that while a dollar drop to 1.65 marks was not ruled out this week, it was unlikely that it will rise beyond a maximum of 1.70 marks and 135,000 yen.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	6/9/1991 Close	13/9/1991 Close	Percent Change
Sterling Pound*	1.7185	1.7297	0.65%
Deutsche Mark	1.7155	1.6900	1.51%
Swiss Franc	1.5066	1.4802	1.80%
French Franc	5.8275	5.7525	1.30%
Japanese Yen	135.62	134.08	1.15%

* USD Per STD

Euro-Currency Interest Rates*

Currency	6/9/1991 1-Month (%)	13/9/1991 1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.62	5.93	5.37	5.75
Sterling Pound	10.57	10.12	10.31	9.93
Deutsche Mark	9.00	9.31	9.06	9.25
Swiss Franc	7.93	7.75	8.06	7.68
French Franc	9.12	9.43	9.12	9.31
Japanese Yen	7.31	6.56	7.00	6.12

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding 1 million dollars, 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	.687	.689
Sterling Pound	1.1883	1.1942
Deutsche Mark	.4074	.4094
Swiss Franc	.4646	.4669
French Franc	.1195	.1201
Japanese Yen*	.5121	.5147
Dutch Guilder	.3613	.3631
Swedish Krona	.1114	.1120
Italian Lira*	.0543	.0546
Belgian Franc	.01971	.01981

* Per 100

Italian industrialists sound alarm bells on slumping bourse

MILAN (R) — Leading Italian industrialists and financiers are sounding alarm bells about the anaemic state of Milan's bourse, weakened in the past month by a major share scandal and dwindling business.

They said investors and companies seeking fresh capital increasingly might look abroad if structural changes are not made soon.

"I cannot be optimistic about the future of the Italian bourse," Giovanni Agnelli, chairman of the huge Fiat SPA group, told reporters at a business conference.

"The problem is the competition from government securities," Mr. Agnelli said. "Government bonds are placed easily on the market, but you cannot say the same thing about stocks."

The bourse's woes contrast sharply with the bond market, the world's third largest behind the U.S. and Japan. Trading volume on the screen-based bond market soared to a record 10.7 trillion lire (\$8 billion) on Thursday.

Attractive yields and expectations of tax reimbursements to foreign investors have touched off a huge rally last week.

Leading Italian newspapers ran page-one articles about the slumping stock market Friday. "Goodbye to the bourse" was the page-one headline in prestigious national daily Corriere Della Sera.

"The bond market is more

attractive and so are other foreign (stock) markets, so there really is no incentive to go into Italy now," said Albert Alonzo, Italian market analyst for Nomura Research Institute in London.

Mr. Alonzo added that key economic issues such as containing the soaring budget deficit and reforming the country's wage-increase system remain unresolved.

"In May and June there were a lot of foreign investors who were expecting a return to the market by domestic investors. That hasn't materialised," Mr. Alonzo said.

Brokers say Italian investors have been frightened about putting their savings in the stock market since a \$5 billion lire (\$65 million) stock scandal erupted in August.

Geneva-based Banque Dumenil-Lehle (Suisse) S.A. has claimed it was the victim of a swindle carried out by a Turin investment company, which has denied the charges.

Three securities firms caught up in the affair already have collapsed, and daily volume on the Milan market has shrunk to a paltry 50 billion lire (\$38 million).

Operators say the bourse needs several reforms. Among these are a quicker settlement procedure for stock deals, continuous electronic trading to replace the current open outcry system and tighter regulation of the market.

U.S. cigarette sales to Soviets rise 7,200%

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. sales of cigarettes to the Soviet Union increased more than 7,200 per cent in the first half of 1991, the Tobacco Merchants Association of the United States has said.

A major shortage in the Soviet Union last year brought rationing to Moscow and demands for the resignation of prime minister Nikolai Ryzhkov. Major U.S. manufacturers were quick to help fill the gap.

Total U.S. exports of cigarettes in the half-year reached 88 billion pieces, according to Farrell Delman, president of the association. Sales within the United States have been going down since 1964, when U.S. surgeon general Luther Terry warned that cigarette smoking far outweighed other factors as a cause of lung disease.

The average American over 18 years of age smoked 4,195 cigarettes in 1964. The number was down to 3,121 in 1988, the last years for which figures were available.

"Given the increasing demand for high quality U.S. manufactured American-blend cigarettes...the U.S. could be producing more and more of the world's tobacco supply," Mr. Delman said in a statement.

The association also recorded increases in the sale of snuff and chewing tobacco.

The U.S. Commerce Department reported U.S. tobacco exports to the Soviet Union as well as \$60,009,107 in the first half of 1991, compared with \$869,167 in the first half of 1990.

Soviets accounted for only a small portion of U.S. cigarette sales. Japan, the leading buyer, took \$769,335,814 worth of U.S. tobacco products.

Belgium bought \$664,801,717 worth. Michael Marion, public affairs manager for the association, said much of what Belgium bought was reexported to eastern Europe.

Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Singapore were also big importers from this country. Turkey's purchases increased even more than the Soviets' — to \$156,868,685 worth from \$22,538,945.

A few, mostly African, countries that bought no tobacco from the United States in the first half of last year took considerable amounts in 1991: Guinea \$11,299,310, Papua New Guinea \$2,509,238, Mauritania \$1,802,970, Gambia \$1,313,760 and Burkina Faso \$683,261.

Iran to build oil export terminal in Malaysia

NICOSIA (R) — Iran plans to set up a terminal in Malaysia with a capacity of 20 million barrels to export its crude oil to Asia. The agreement was reached in Tehran between a Malaysian team headed by Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba, the Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Massoud Raghani Zanjani, vice president and head of the plan and budget organisation, as saying. Mr. Raghani Zanjani said investment for the terminal would come from Malaysia but did not give a figure. Mr. Baba told Tehran radio he discussed the project with Iran's Oil Minister Gholamreza Agazadeh. Experts from the two countries would follow up the talks in detail, he added. Mr. Baba said Malaysia, keen to increase palm oil exports, agreed to grant \$500,000 towards setting up a palm oil research centre in Iran. Mr. Raghani Zanjani said the two sides had also held talks on export of Iranian fruits to Malaysia and participation of Malaysian firms in building housing in Iran.

Jordanian glass fibre project enters final stage for implementation

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Evaluation of a feasibility study on setting up a glass fibre plant is under way by the Jordan Investment Corporation (JIC) and the final decision to go ahead with the project and plug in a major gap in the local market is expected to be made soon.

The assessment of the "technical and financial aspects" of the project as contained in the study, prepared by MMIS Consultants, is expected to be completed this week and recommendations will be submitted to the decision-makers by Thursday, said Munter Saudi, a senior official of JIC, a government agency.

Mr. Saudi declined to reveal any specific details of the proposed project except that it had been established that the plant will be mostly export-oriented in addition to meeting the needs of six or seven local fibre-glass manufacturers who are now depending on imports of the product.

"The (envisaged) export markets would include some of the advanced countries," Mr. Saudi said, adding that there was an international market shortage of glass fibre, mostly used for insulation purposes in various industries in addition to liquid tanks and for products such as bathtubs as well as light-weight furniture.

Mr. Saudi noted that Jordan could also enjoy a competitive edge in the international market since the main component in raw materials involved in the glass industry — silicate (sand) of various types — was abundant in the Kingdom.

Mr. Saudi said options for financing and capital investment

in the proposed project, which will have an annual production capacity of 5,000 tonnes, remained open and that these details could be finalised when definite offers are invited from equipment suppliers.

Meanwhile, plans to set up a glass-container manufacturing plant are awaiting an "updated feasibility study" by MMIS consultants. The project was expected to be finalised by early August, but certain technical and financial aspects forced a delay in the implementation of the project. The fresh feasibility study is scheduled to be completed in six to seven weeks' time.

The glass-container project will be built by the Jordan Glass Industries Company (JGIC) with partial financing from JIC and the Industrial Development Bank (IDB). Options for other financing and capital investment — including equipment supplier owning equity in the project — also remain open.

The project could be set up either in Jordan or in Yemen, if the Yemeni private sector is interested, according to JIGC officials.

"If (the Yemenis) are interested in the proposal, they will be welcome to come in," JIGC Chairman Farbi Obaid said in July. "If not, we are going head on our own since we are convinced that there is an urgent need for a plant to produce glass bottles and utensils in Jordan."

Original plans called for an investment around \$25 million for the project, but it was not immediately known whether the specifications had been modified since then. The output of the project is expected to be between 15,000 and 20,000 tonnes and the plant will offer close to 200 new job opportunities.

Moroccan oil group gets \$60m credit

RABAT (R) — The Moroccan oil company Societe Cherifienne des Petroles (SCP) has signed a \$60 million credit agreement with nine foreign banks, the company has said.

The credit, signed with a group of banks led by the France's Banque Nationale de Paris, will finance part of SCP's imports of crude oil and refined products. State-owned SCP operates the country's second largest oil refinery, at Sidi Kacem northeast of Rabat, which has a capacity of 1.2

million tonnes a year. Since 1929 it has exploited oil wells, now near exhaustion, in the Rharb valley area near Sidi Kacem.

It also has about 40 per cent of the domestic bottled gas market, 10 filling centres and a factory.

In another area, the World Bank also lent Morocco \$145 million to help finance the building of 250 schools and the refurbishment of 100 others in rural areas, the official news agency MAP has reported.

UNCTAD report predicts world economic upturn by end of 1991

GENEVA (R) — The United Nations forecast Monday that the world economy would begin the long haul out of recession towards the end of this year.

The U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in a report that global output would grow just 0.7 per cent this year after achieving only 1.8 per cent growth in 1990.

For 1992, however, UNCTAD predicted 2.3 per cent growth in output and a doubling of world trade growth to six per cent.

"The end of the Gulf war has inspired new business confidence," UNCTAD said. "The prospects that the United States will escape from the grip of recession are seemingly good, and so are the chances that economic growth will pick up — even if only modestly — in most developed countries."

UNCTAD said the exact extent of the upturn was not sure and depended on factors as varied as the outcome of world trade negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and political events in central and eastern Europe.

In its annual trade and development report, UNCTAD stressed that the poor overall picture for 1991 masked considerable variations among regions, and even within them.

It said that among richer nations the steady deceleration in overall growth since 1988 had continued this year — in contrast to some less developed countries such as China, where the industrial sector grew by 13.7 per cent on a year-on-year basis in the first quarter of 1991.

But Western stagnation should give way to a modest recovery by the end of 1991, UNCTAD said, predicting a 2.7 per cent growth rate in 1992 after 0.9 per cent this year.

In North America, Britain and the Nordic countries, UNCTAD said the recession which started in 1989 may bottom out in the second half of this year.

The report said that in the United States easier money and a revival of consumer confidence were having positive effects, although unemployment was at its highest levels since 1986.

"The end of the Gulf war and

the drop in fuel prices has contributed to a lowering of inflationary expectations and a revival of consumer confidence, which are expected to facilitate an upturn in the latter half of 1991," it said.

For the Soviet Union, the prognosis was less optimistic: "Whatever economic policies are followed, the economic crisis has almost certainly not yet bottomed out, and depressed conditions are likely to continue over the next few years."

The report was completed before the political transformation in the Soviet Union following last month's failed coup attempt.

Originally set up in 1964 to secure better trade deals for the world's poorer nations, the U.N.-funded body is now primarily a forum for debate on world economic matters.

UNCTAD said Asia had enjoyed mixed fortunes in 1990 and again this year. Improvements in east Asia, especially by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, were offset by the impact of the Gulf crisis in west Asia, particularly in Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan.

China's economic momentum would continue over the next two years, the report said, with overall economic growth projected at around six per cent this year, although the trade balance would probably decline during the year.

Africa will be hard hit by the slowdown in world economic activity this year through lower commodity prices, higher interest rates and reduced demand from developed states. African countries will need to intensify efforts to attract development capital and increase economic liberalisation, UNCTAD said.

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Yugoslav forces pound Croats; more troops reportedly surrender

ZAGREB (Agencies) — Federal jets, tanks and gunboats reportedly pounded Croatian forces Sunday in bitter fighting that killed at least 13 people following the rebel republic's blockade of Yugoslav army garrisons.

Fighting engulfed many areas of the republic, and Croatia's claim that its blockade was forcing military garrisons to surrender appeared to make the bloody fighting even more widespread and confused.

Croatia said it had forced 300-400 army troops stationed at facilities throughout the republic, including dozens of officers, to give up. There was no confirmation of the figures.

The federal military used jets, tanks and rocket launchers to pound Croatian strongholds Saturday after Croatia cut food, water and electricity to garrisons.

Late Saturday, Belgrade Radio reported that the barracks in the Danube River town of Vukovar were relieved by a strong armoured column that broke through the Croatian barricades.

But the Yugoslav News Agency

Tanjung, said early Sunday the clashes in Vukovar were continued, indicating the barracks still were under siege.

Two federal jets attacked Ploce, midway between Split and Dubrovnik, six times, Croatian TV reported. Split Radio reported three Croat guardsmen were killed and two injured.

A Croatian Defence Ministry official said seven Yugoslav navy boats were in Ploce Harbour and four more were en route from a major naval base on the island of Vis.

Croatian media later reported the boats had opened fire on a maritime warehouse in the harbour.

A military warehouse in Ploce, which Croatia listed as one of the facilities that surrendered, also was said to be under attack.

Tanjung said air force jets stopped attacking Ploce after destroying four trucks that were carrying weapons out of the warehouse.

Croatia's decision to blockade military facilities drew sharp criticism from officials of the European Community (EC), who have

been trying to arrange a peace plan for Yugoslavia, and an immediate response from the army.

The army has long been accused by Croatia of helping guerrillas of the Serb minority who have seized a third of the breakaway republic in fighting that has left more than 400 people dead in the past 2½ months. The army has said it only intervened to separate Serbs and Croats.

Tanjung reported three Serb guerrillas died and six were wounded in fighting during the previous 24 hours in Okucani, on the strategic Belgrade-Zagreb Highway. Five Croatian fighters were killed and 15 were injured.

Fierce fighting was reported around the eastern Croatian stronghold Osijek, Pakrac and Stara Gradiska, Tanjung said.

Belgrade media said Hrvatska Dubica had fallen to Serb fighters and that the Croats were establishing a new defence line outside of the town, located 90 kilometres from Zagreb.

Zagreb Radio said more than 1,500 mortar shells rained on Vukovar Saturday and mortar and tank grenade fire resumed

after dawn Sunday.

Pope calls for end to Croatia bloodshed

Pope John Paul called on the Yugoslav government and the European Community (EC) Sunday to put an end to ethnic fighting in the Republic of Croatia.

"I implore once again those responsible in the Yugoslav government to put an end to this tragic and absurd conflict," he said.

"It is not with arms that differences between peoples are resolved," the Pope said at the end of his regular Angelus address from the balcony of his residence outside Rome.

He called on all countries, particularly European, to help end "an unjust and cruel" war between Croatian forces and Serb guerrillas backed by the Serbian federal army.

"I turn in particular to the European countries, which cannot shirk the grave responsibility they have in the face of this drama," the Pope said.



Ingvar Carlsson
Swedes vote for new parliament

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Swedes voted Sunday in parliamentary elections considered crucial for the future of the welfare state as it has been shaped by the ruling Social Democrats.

Pre-election surveys indicated a close election and Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson said he would not be surprised to lose votes to the non-Socialist parties.

A bloc of four liberal-conservative parties was favoured to win a majority of the 349 Riksdag seats with promises of lower taxes, business growth incentives, reduction of bureaucracy and privatisations.

Carl Bildt, the 42-year-old conservative leader, hoped to replace Mr. Carlsson as prime minister by heading a coalition of his moderate party, The Centre, Liberals and the Christian Democrats.

Mr. Bildt said "if the non-Socialists win, it will be hard for the Social Democrats to make a comeback during the 1990s."

Mr. Carlsson told the Swedish News Agency (TT) Sunday, "It is important that the Social Democrats remain a dominating force, maybe more important than to win the mandate to govern for three years." His party has governed Sweden for 53 of the last 59 years.

Final surveys indicated up to 13 per cent of the 6.4 million Swedes eligible to vote were undecided.

Bangladeshis vote on new system of government

DHAKA (R) — Millions of Bangladeshis began voting in a referendum Sunday on whether the country will restore parliamentary government or retain its presidential system.

Officials said 62.3 million voters were expected to take part in the referendum, though turnout in some northern regions could be low because of floods.

"We have even set up polling centres on some boats in the flooded areas to let a maximum number of people vote," one election official said.

Bangladesh's parliament voted overwhelmingly last month for a constitutional amendment bill to restore a parliamentary system of democracy in Bangladesh to end 16 years of presidential rule and military dictatorship.

The constitution requires the president to call a referendum before giving assent to such a bill.

Most political parties expect a huge popular endorsement of the amendment bill.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her arch-rival,

Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League, have appealed to voters to approve the change.

"It will usher in a new era of democracy, make our parliament supreme and any future government accountable to it," Mrs. Khaleda said in a national broadcast.

"The civilian and military dictatorship which oppressed us for so many years will be buried forever if the bill is approved through referendum," Mrs. Hasina said in a statement.

Under the constitutional amendment, the prime minister and not the president would be the country's executive head.

It stipulates the president would be head of state and act in accordance with the advice of the prime minister, who would be elected from among parliament members and run the government with the help of a cabinet.

Under the existing constitution, the president is the source of all power and runs the government with the help of a cabinet and a prime minister who are answerable to him.



Michelangelo's David damaged by hammer-wielding man

FLORENCE, Italy (AP) — A mentally disturbed man wielding a hammer attacked Michelangelo's famed statue of David Saturday but did not cause serious damage, police and museum officials said.

Piero Cannata, 47, was subdued by startled tourists and guards at the Accademia Museum after he took a hammer from inside his jacket and hit the 487-year-old statue once, breaking the second toe on the left foot.

"The material damage is repairable since we have found all the fragments, but the emotional distress remains. He damaged the most famous statue in the world," said Museum Director Antonio Paolucci.

Museum officials predicted it would take no more than two to three days to repair the masterpiece once the work begins.

Cannata was charged by Deputy Prosecutor Emma Cosentino with damage to a national cultural treasure. He was taken to the psychiatric ward of a local hospital for observation.

Singapore's Raffles Hotel reopens today

SINGAPORE (R) — Singapore's exotic Raffles Hotel, whose famous guests have included Somerset Maugham, Rudyard Kipling and Jean Harlow, reopens in style Monday after a two-year facelift.

The 100-year-old building, restored to the grandeur of its heyday in a 160-million dollars (\$94 million) project, will regain its place as one of the "grand hotels" of Asia.

General Manager Jennie Chua said, "Named after Singapore's founder Sir Stamford Raffles, the hotel was opened in 1887 by the three Sarkis brothers, Armenians who came to Singapore to seek their fortune. With Singapore standing at a crossroads of ocean travel, its guests included writers Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham and film stars Charlie Chaplin and Jean Harlow. The Raffles came close to being demolished in the 1970s after several years of debt. It was saved by a flood of protests and declared a national monument in 1987. The restored hotel has 104 suites ranging in price from 600 to 6,000 dollars (\$340 to \$3,400), all with marble bathrooms, hardwood floors and ceiling fans. Oriental rugs and period etchings adorn the floors and walls. It also boasts a billiard table under which the last tiger in Singapore is reputed to have been shot when taking refuge."

Dionysus statue stolen from Hermitage

MOSCOW (AP) — A 1,400-year-old statue of the Greek god Dionysus valued at 100,000 rubles (\$170,000) has been stolen from Leningrad's Hermitage Museum, a news agency said Saturday.

The statue of the mythical god of fertility standing his wife, Ariadne, was discovered missing on Aug. 30, the Russian Information Agency reported.

However, officials determined it was stolen during the night Aug. 11-12. The report did not say where the statue was at the time, how it was stolen or why it wasn't noticed missing for two weeks.

The statue stands 22 centimetres tall, weighs about 5 kilograms (11 pounds), and had been dated to the 3rd or 4th century, the news agency reported.

Man says he raped over 200 women

MEXICO CITY (R) — A man who placed advertisements in Mexican newspapers offering marriage with a millionaire claims to have raped more than 200 women, authorities said Friday.

Gerardo Esquivel Reyes was arrested in the northern city of Saltillo after a woman told police he tried to force her to have sex, said a spokesman for the attorney general in the state of Coahuila.

He said Ms. Esquivel confessed to raping at least 200 women since 1979, many of them enticed by his newspaper ad saying, "millionaire engineer seeks matrimony with simple woman." No formal rape charges have been filed against Mr. Esquivel because authorities have no proof yet to back up his claim, the spokesman said.

"We're still investigating," the spokesman said, adding that Mr. Esquivel, 53, had been released on bail. Women's rights groups say only a handful of rape victims in Mexico ever file charges because of embarrassment and fears of retaliation or mistreatment by the police.

S. African peace pact brings respite from violence

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Police reported scattered attacks and two deaths, but a national peace pact ushered in relative calm Sunday after a week of vicious black factional fighting.

The white-led government and the two leading black groups Saturday signed the peace accord, which establishes codes of conduct for political parties and the security forces, and sets up bodies to monitor compliance.

Previous peace pacts have collapsed, setting back President F.W. de Klerk's efforts to negotiate a new constitution that will give voting rights to the black majority.

Many observers are predicting

failure for the latest accord, signed after a weeklong surge in black township fighting around Johannesburg that left more than 130 people dead.

"Pact signed — not sealed," said the front-page headline in City Press, a leading black-oriented weekly.

Much of the fighting in recent years has pitted supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) against backers of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party. But the past week was marked by random attacks often carried out with automatic weapons against defenceless commuters on buses and trains.

Police Sunday reported two

overnight deaths in township fighting near Johannesburg. The unrest report also said four people were injured in a grenade attack east of the city, and one man was hurt when he was pushed off a moving train in the Soweto township.

Police said there was no additional trouble reported as of midday Sunday, and the township appeared less tense than at any time since the violence erupted Sept. 8.

"We dedicate ourselves to ending the specter of terror in the lives of our people," said ANC President Nelson Mandela.

Some radical white and black leaders either boycotted the

meeting altogether or told the meeting they would not sign the pact because they did not believe it would work.

About 3,000 Zulus supporting Inkatha and armed with clubs, spears and shields appeared without warning outside the downtown hotel where the pact was signed.

Police and soldiers in combat gear with armoured vehicles ringed the dancing and chanting Zulus, who eventually dispersed. However, one Inkatha supporter was hacked to death afterward.

In addition, 16 men died in fighting Saturday at workers' barracks on a gold mine southeast of Johannesburg. Mine officials said the fighting appeared to stem from "tribal differences," and there was no indication it was linked to the long war between the ANC and Inkatha.

Ozone satellite has communications trouble

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (R) — A satellite that will study holes in the Earth's ozone layer developed communications trouble early Sunday after it was sent into orbit from the space shuttle Discovery.

Ground controllers found difficulty in making and maintaining contact with the upper atmosphere research satellite in the first few hours after its release into space, the U.S. space agency said.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) engineers worked through the night trying to understand the problem but were confident it could be solved without jeopardising the probe's two-year mission.

"We know we have a very healthy spacecraft," project manager Mike Luther said at mission control in Texas a few hours after astronauts on Discovery set the satellite free in a 354-mile-high (570-km) orbit.

Mr. Luther suspected a "procedural error" in pointing the probe's main antenna but "there's a myriad of things that must be checked," he said.

The troubled antenna is the one designed to beam down data the satellite gathers on the Earth's deteriorating atmosphere through NASA's tracking and data relay satellite network.

Two others on the probe can be used, but with reduced capability, Mr. Luther said.

The deployment was delayed for about half an hour because of the communications problems, which NASA officials thought had been solved.

Because of the delay, the satellite release occurred in darkness, lit only by floodlights in the shuttle payload bay, instead of in daylight as planned.

Flight Commander John Creighton gently manoeuvred the shuttle away from the sensitive satellite but stayed closer than planned because of a computer aboard Discovery was the only sure communications link ground controllers had with the probe.

They are scheduled to fire the 15,000-pound (6,800-kg) satellite's small jets to boost it 18 miles (29 km) higher into space.

West African leaders try to solve Liberian feud as fighting flares

ABIDJAN (R) — West African leaders will convene a third summit in Ivory Coast Monday to try to end the 21-month-long Liberian civil war at a time of renewed combat.

The meeting takes on added urgency since Liberian exiles two weeks ago launched attacks from Sierra Leone on western Liberia, held by the main rebel leader, Charles Taylor.

Mr. Taylor, in radio broadcasts and through official spokesmen, said he had repulsed the attacks and had even penetrated into Sierra Leone to create a "protective corridor."

There have been no independent reports on the bush fighting, which constitutes the most serious breakdown in a ceasefire in effect since last November.

In a sign of its importance, all 16 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been invited to assist a five-nation mediating committee in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast's inland capital.

Senegal's President Abdou Diouf, who last week agreed to send troops to a West African peacekeeping force in Liberia, is due to attend the summit.

Diplomats and officials in Ivory Coast also said President Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, the regional superpower and a key to resolving the war, was also expected. Nigeria is the current chairman of the 50-member Organisation of African Unity.

The war, which Mr. Taylor launched with an invasion from neighbouring Ivory Coast in December 1989, overthrew Liberia's President Samuel Doe, who was assassinated a year ago, but has left the country divided and its economy in a shambles.

Mr. Taylor controls 90 per cent of the country founded in 1847 by freed American slaves while an interim government, backed mainly by Nigeria, runs the capital Monrovia.

The main task of the Yamoussoukro summit, chaired by Africa's veteran statesman, President Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, was originally to seek disarmament and confinement of Mr. Taylor's guerrilla forces so elections could be held.

But that agenda has been complicated by the recent upsurge in fighting.

"The work to resolve the conflict is moving slowly," one Western diplomat said. "And it could be affected by the renewed fighting at the border."

Despite intense pressures to resolve the conflict so that Liberia can rebuild and hundreds of thousands of exiles living in neighbouring countries can return home, there remain big differences between positions of the main antagonists.

One of the main sticking points has been the composition of the 7,000-strong West African peacekeeping force controlling Monrovia.

Mr. Taylor has said Nigeria is a party to the civil war because of its links with the late Mr. Doe and has insisted the West African force, known as ECOMOG and dominated by Nigeria, be replaced, preferably by a United Nations peacekeeping force.

Ernest Eastman, foreign minister in Mr. Taylor's rebel government, told a news conference in Ivory Coast last week that ECOMOG "shouldn't be dominated by one nation" — a pointed reference to Nigeria. He repeated the suggestion that U.N. soldiers be sent to Liberia.

At a news conference earlier in

the week, Lamini Waritay, information minister of the interim government in Monrovia, reiterated his government's opposition to replacing the West African forces.

"ECOMOG is the saving grace of the Liberian people," Mr. Waritay said, but added his government would agree to include in ECOMOG forces "from countries Mr. Taylor is comfortable with."

Quayle ends Africa tour

U.S. Vice-President Dan Quayle, on a weekend visit to Ivory Coast, said the United States supported the continued presence of the West African force in Liberia.

Mr. Quayle ended a five-nation Africa tour Saturday by advising governments to democratise and end state control of economies if they want American aid.

"The United States has been leading the charge for democracy and democratic values, we will continue to do so. Democracy knows no boundary. Democracy is sweeping around the world, and those countries that have not experienced democratic values, I certainly hope that in due time that will," Mr. Quayle said before leaving for Washington.

He earlier told reporters that he had raised human rights issues during visits to two stops on his tour, Malawi and Nigeria. Hastings Banda, the president for life, rules Malawi. Nigeria's military rulers have promised to hand authority back to a civilian government by the end of next year.

Speaking to African businessmen at the African Development Bank, Mr. Quayle said the wave of demands for democracy sweeping the continent recalled the pressure to end colonial rule 30 years ago.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Hong Kong voters set to snub China

HONG KONG (R) — The British colony of Hong Kong voted in its first direct parliamentary election Sunday, with opinion polls indicating a resounding victory for liberals and a snub for the territory's future master, China. A poll conducted on the eve of voting showed liberal pro-democracy candidates would sweep virtually all 18 directly elected seats in the largely rubber-stamp Legislative Council (Legco). China has supported several candidates through local pro-Peking groups and advised residents on how to vote through its mouthpiece here, the China News Service.

"It's time for Hong Kong people to show that they care about democracy," said one voter, a 28-year-old professional woman. Hong Kong must shed its reputation for political apathy before China takes over in 1997, she said.

"It's a message to China that people in Hong Kong do care." Fifty-four candidates are running in the landmark poll, which under Hong Kong's system of limited democracy allows less than a third of Legco's 60 seats to be directly elected.

Andreotti arrives in China

PEKING (R) — Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti arrived in Peking Sunday, the latest in a series of diplomatic triumphs for China, which suffered two years of isolation after crushing pro-democracy demonstrations. Mr. Andreotti will be the third leader of a group of seven industrialised democracies in just six weeks to meet Premier Li Peng, widely blamed for ordering the army into Peking's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989.

Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu came on Aug. 10, followed by British Prime Minister John Major on Sept. 2. Both followed the protocol necessity of shaking Mr. Li's hand and reviewing Chinese troops, their bayonets fixed, in front of the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square, where the pro-democracy demonstrators had their headquarters. With Mr. Andreotti's arrival on a six-day tour, visits by Western leaders have become routine again, diplomats said.

"The floodgates have definitely opened," one said. "All that is missing is a visit from the U.S."

Floods hit southern Vietnam

HANOI (R) — The worst floods in more than a decade have hit the fertile rice-growing areas of southern Vietnam, killing at least 17 people and threatening huge swathes of prime agricultural land, the official Vietnam News Agency (VNA) said Sunday.

The flooding, centred in the delta where the Mekong River flows into Vietnam from Cambodia, has forced the evacuation of 10,000 people and may damage as much as 110,000 hectares (275,000 acres) of rice paddies and orchards, it said.

The flooding had submerged roads and collapsed bridges in the provinces of An Giang, Dong Thap and Long An, the news agency said. It was the worst flood disaster to hit the region since 1978, VNA said.

U.K. cracks down on crime

LONDON (R) — Britain, facing record crime and outbreaks of youth riots, is drawing up plans to identify potential criminals among children as young as five, the Sunday Times newspaper reported.

It quoted Home Office (Interior Ministry) Minister of State John Patten as saying the government wanted to give special help to children who could drift into a life of lawlessness. "We want to identify these youngsters who are at risk at an early stage so we can help them and their parents before they reach the stage where they will face punishment," Mr. Patten said.

Draft proposals for a crime prevention drive among five- and six-year-olds were expected to be discussed at talks Sunday between Prime Minister John Major and Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Kenneth Baker, the Sunday Times said.

Mr. Baker said Saturday more police officers would be sent to troubled areas and also announced a campaign to crack down on car thefts after a "joy-riding" craze among youths led to violent disturbances.

Slovak nationalists demand sovereignty

PRAGUE (AP) — Dozens of top Slovak politicians have united

to press the parliament of Czechoslovakia's poorer, eastern republic to declare sovereignty, reports said Saturday. The move marked another upsurge in the separatism that has troubled Czechoslovakia, and begun tearing apart other countries of central and Eastern Europe since the fall of Communist rule.

The 35 politicians, including former Slovak Premier Vladimir Meciar, formed an initiative called "for a free Slovakia," and are planning to collect signatures and hold rallies to support their cause, the Mlada Fronta Dnes daily said.

They are demanding that Slovakia be declared a sovereign republic with its own constitution, president and armed forces. They say that then an alliance with an equally sovereign Czech Republic could be negotiated.

Slovakia is home to about a third of Czechoslovakia's 15.5 million people. The area was dominated for centuries by Hungary, and joined with the Czech Republic in the formation of Czechoslovakia after World War I.

Panama freezes accounts in 28 banks

PANAMA CITY (R) — Panamanian authorities froze almost \$40 million in accounts at 28 banks suspected of laundering drug money, a newspaper has reported.

Panama's attorney general's office suspended the accounts after receiving information they were allegedly being used by Colombians and other foreigners to process drug funds, the independent daily La Prensa said.

A top official from the Drug Secretariat, a division of the attorney general's office, told the newspaper both foreign and Panamanian banks were under investigation. He would not reveal the names of the banks.

U.S. sets off nuclear weapon

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States detonated a nuclear weapon Saturday at its Nevada test site after days of swirling winds delayed the underground blast.

The blast was the fifth this year at the Nevada site. The U.S. Department of Energy explodes nuclear warheads to make sure ageing bombs still work and to help design new ones. The new bombs are protection "against our enemies, whoever they might be," a spokesman said, adding the question of whether nuclear weapons still need to be improved "is up to policy-makers in Washington."

'Sikh rebels trained in Pakistan'

LONDON (R) — A man identified as a Sikh separatist guerrilla commander in India's northern Punjab state told British television Saturday his men were trained in Pakistan.

"Training is given to any militant who crosses into Pakistan. He is guaranteed training there. On his return he trains others," Paramjit Singh Sansra told Channel Four Television's The World This Week.

"Some of those newly trained on this side go over to Pakistan to receive a more proper and advanced training. Then they come back to continue the fight."

The World This Week said Pakistan had always denied training Sikh separatists from Punjab but had not responded to an invitation to comment on its programme. The programme said the guerrillas was a lieutenant general in the Khalistan Commando Force, one of the separatist groups involved in a decade-long revolt for a Sikh homeland.

5 killed in U.S. jail fire

FORSYTH, Missouri (R) — A fire swept through a U.S. jail, killing five prisoners trapped in their cells and injuring 27, police said.

A faulty generator was believed to have caused the blaze which broke out before dawn at the Taney County Jail in Missouri state. The county sheriff's office said an automatic release that should have opened cell doors failed in a maximum-security section at the facility.

Rescue workers had to use torches to cut through bars to reach prisoners in some cells and used hand cranks to get other cells doors open. Four inmates died of smoke inhalation at the jail and the fifth died in hospital at nearby Springfield, Missouri, authorities said.

They said 27 people were injured, most due to smoke inhalation.